Latimer Cuts County Property Taxes Four Budgets in a Row

No One-Shots, $65 M Surplus

By Dan Murphy

Westchester County Executive George Latimer, left, with Deputy County Executive Ken Jenkins, presents proposed County budget for 2023.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer has proposed a $6 million dollar cut to the County property tax levy in a preview of his 2023 proposed Operating Budget. This is the fourth County property tax cut in a row presented by Latimer as County Executive. Latimer said: “I have been all around this County; I have heard the stories from families who are feeling the strain of inflation—this budget is for them. We have once again cut taxes, and expanded the programs that the people of this County need. I am proud of this budget, this is what honest and fair governing is, that is who we are as an administration.”

Closing 2022 with projected $65.9 million operating surplus
No borrowing for tax cert
No borrowing for pension
No use of fund balance
2023 Budget contains no borrowing or one-shots
No use of fund balance
No borrowing for cash flow

Latimer said: “The 2023 Budget reflects a continued commitment to programs that meet the needs of Westchester County residents. We have cut taxes but we have also added $1 million to food security programs that serve 100 pantries, we have increased funding for homeless shelter contracts, and we have put in $500k for New Rochelle Family Court support services.”

Budget Director Larry Soule said: “This budget reflects the steadfast commitment of the County Executive to serve the needs of all residents of Westchester County, while at the same time remaining accountable to the needs of the taxpayers.”

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Latimer as County Executive.

There is no use of fund balance used to fund one-shots for the first time in Westchester history or in the budget of County Executive George Latimer.

No borrowing for cash flow
No borrowing for pension
No borrowing for tax cert
No borrowing for one-shots

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Two Westchester school districts decision to part ways with two long serving, beloved coaches, for reasons that parents, students and taxpayers in Eastchester and Katonah cannot understand, is being met with massive support for both, and the Superintendents and School Boards for both the Eastchester and Katonah districts.

By Dan Murphy

Two Long Serving, Beloved Westchester High School Coaches Let Go; One Rehired

By Dan Murphy

Westchester Rising

Election Wrap-Up: Northern Westchester is Red but the rest of the county remains ‘Blue’

By Dan Murphy

The photo above is real. Republican Congressman-elect Mike Lawler, on a visit to Washington, took a photo with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. At least we have this sign of bi-partisanship before the election of 2024.

So what happened in the Westchester elections on Nov. 8? Here’s five take-aways to ponder.

1—It appears that Republicans will hold a slim majority in the House. A major factor in handing the Speaker’s gavel to Kevin McCarthy will be the election of Republicans to Congress from New York State, including Lawler, Mark Molinaro and two new GOP congressmen from Long Island. Most attribute the strong showing of Lee Zeldin, the republican candidate for Governor, for the election of a handful of republicans to Congress.

2—Zeldin’s 53%-47% loss to Governor Kathy Hochul was a good result for republicans, but not the victory that many had hoped for. “Zeldin had coattails for Congress, but that’s about it,” said one Westchester republican.

3—Assemblyman-elect Matt Slater will be the only republican member of the State delegation of State Senators and Assembly members from Westchester. All of the other Assembly and State Senate races in Westchester had democrats.

Thank You Andre Wallace—Rents Out Picture House for 200 to See Black Panther-Wakanda

By Dan Murphy

During the holiday season, we like look for examples of Good Will, and giving back to our community. Former Mount Vernon Mayor Andre Wallace did that last week, when he provided 200 residents of the city a free screening of the movie Black Panther: Wakanda at the Picture House in Bronxville.

“I learned about how others have rented out the theater for fund raisers, but I wanted to do something to give the community a chance to come together and have a great family day. With rising prices and inflation making it difficult on a lot of families, I wanted to give parents the opportunity to have a good time without worries about anything,” said Wallace.

The Family Day included the movie, snacks and Black Panther action figures for all of the kids, free of charge. Some donations made it happen but also the generosity of Wallace, who thanked Shae Darden for her help in making sure everyone got to the theater and in their seats.

“Everyone had a blast, and I loved it. It’s great to see so many smiling faces and we all came together.”

In our conversations with the Picture House, we also learned that at their Pelham theater, an anonymous donor rents out the place for a screening of It’s A Wonderful Life every year.

Here’s hoping that this story can help all of us find a little more generosity this time of year. If you have a story that will help us spread some good cheer, email it to dmurphy@risingmediagroup.com.

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Peace Poster Contest Winners Announced

The Lions are proud to have worked with Victoria Rolett from the French-American School, Elsa Thorez from The French-American School, Emma Sapperestein from Hommocks Middle School, Nina Henry from Rye Neck Middle School and Estelle Puong from Saints John & Paul School in their efforts to bring this contest to the community and provide these students with the opportunity to share their visions of peace.

In addition to the winners, the following runners up received honorable mention: Marina Leifert & Mathilde Auguste from The French American School, Evan Hammer & Abby Andrews from Rye Neck Middle School and Amelie Oddo & Ngarji Bardoux-Cheseau from Saints John & Paul School.

Prizes for winners and runners up were provided by Paul Mahoney from Circle 7 Framing in Larchmont and Jennifer Gomes of One River School in Rye. These local winners were announced on November 10, 2022 at a special presentation at the Mamaroneck Library. The event was attended by the students, their families, teachers, and dignitaries & guests. County Legislator Catherine Parker presented certificates to the winners and runners up in recognition of their accomplishments. Maryann Joyce Director of Constituent Services for NY State Senator Shelley Mayer's office presented the certificates to the winners from both State Senator Shelley Mayer and Assemblyman Steve Otis.

The Lions International Peace Poster Contest is an annual worldwide competition for children 11-13, encouraging them to express their vision of world peace through art, based on a particular theme. This year's theme was "Lead With Compassion".

In addition to the winners, the following runners up received honorable mention: Marina Leifert & Mathilde Auguste from The French-American School, Emma Sapperestein from Hommocks Middle School, Nina Henry from Rye Neck Middle School and Estelle Puong from Saints John & Paul School, have taken the first step to becoming an internationally recognized artist by winning the Larchmont Mamaroneck Lions local competition in the Lions International Peace Poster Contest.

One of the winning Peace Poster contest winners from Nina Henry, from Rye Neck Middle School

Stepnica High School's lacrosse sports program made history today as six outstanding athletes committed to play with Division One universities during the first National Collegiate Athletic Association’s (NCAA) Signing Day. A seventh student, who is a star baseball athlete, also signed to play Division I baseball.

On hand to congratulate the students at the ceremony, held in the school’s gymnasium, were their families, teammates, members of Stepnica’s administration, faculty and coaching staff.

Stepnica’s unprecedented group comprised the largest number of lacrosse players from any high school in Westchester, private and public high school, who were recognized by the NCAA this year.

The six Stepnica lacrosse star athletes and their Division One universities are: Sean Fogarty of Yonkers (Long Island University); Andrew Girolamo of Mahopac (Binghamton); Luke lacrosse of Mahopac (Monmouth); Brady Sharkey of Tuckahoe; Nolan Sharkey of Tuckahoe (Binghamton); and Matthew Stewart of Cortland Manor (UMass - Amherst). Kyle Eddington of Valhalla committed to play Division I baseball at University of Maryland-Baltimore County.

Two of the players—Brady and Nolan Sharkey—are also identical twin brothers who will continue the next chapter of their academic and athletic education at the same university, Binghamton.

“The NCAA Signing Day represents yet another milestone for Stepnica’s lacrosse program,” declared James Goldmann (Class of ‘04), head coach of the Crusaders varsity lacrosse team, adding: “It’s been quite a notable year for them and their teammates for having captured the 2022 CIHLAA’s New York A championship title. We congratulate them and wish them continued success in their post-secondary pursuits.’

Paul Carty, Principal, noted that Stepnica’s superb student athletes will be joining a very select group of lacrosse and baseball players who will be competing in Division I athletics, “which makes theirs a truly singular achievement for them personally and for Stepnica.”

According to the NCAA’s 2020 estimated probability of high school lacrosse athletes playing collegiate lacrosse, only 3.3% of them will be selected to play at the top Division 1 level. And less than 2% of high school baseball athletes are accepted to play at Division 1 colleges.

The NCAA also notes that education is at the forefront of Division I’s mission and Division I schools collectively award billions of dollars in athletic scholarships each year. “Student-athletes at Division I schools are required to meet specified academic standards to practice and compete in athletics... These criteria ensure that student-athletes are prepared academically and athletically for the rigors of college coursework and are on a path to graduate throughout their college experience.”

For more information, visit www.stepnica.org.
On Nov. 14, supporters and detractors of a proposed ban on the sale on menthol cigarettes in Westchester County held rallies outside the County office building, hours before the County Board of Legislators cast a vote on the proposed ban of flavored tobacco products.

Members of the Westchester County Board of Legislators are reconsidering a measure that would ban flavored tobacco products. Legislators argue that there are currently more than 445 businesses in Westchester County that sell flavored tobacco products. In Westchester, 40% of all cigarettes sold are menthol and 38% of all smokeless tobacco is flavored. If this proposed ban goes into effect the county will lose $1.8 million per year in tax revenue and the elimination of hundreds of jobs will also adversely impact the economy.

Opponents of the ban also point to the fact that there are currently 906 retailers within only five miles of Westchester County’s border, all of whom will continue to sell flavored tobacco products. This ban would drive customers to bordering retail locations for these products, subsequently reducing unemployment and economic sustainability for local mom-and-pop small businesses in Westchester County. These businesses rely on the revenue from flavored tobacco products to compensate their employees and keep their doors open.

Supporters of the ban point to the fact that in New York, 22.3% of high school students use cigarettes, with most preferring to use flavor such as chocolate, coffee, desserts, mint, and menthol reported as the most popular flavors. Menthol cigarettes play a significant role in enticing new users—predominantly those under 18 and in Black and brown communities to begin smoking. New York spends $12.07 billion annually in healthcare costs directly caused by smoking, and there are 280,000 kids now under 18 and alive in New York who will ultimately die prematurely from smoking.

“Californians have just voted overwhelmingly in favor of banning the sale of flavored tobacco,” said Legislator Jewel Williams Johnson, Chair of the Health Committee and sponsor of the bill. “In Westchester County, we are setting the trend for our state to do the same in protecting the health of children and the general public by removing access to these deadly products.”

“With this ban, Westchester can pass the most comprehensive flavored tobacco ban in New York,” said Legislator Catherine Borgia, Chair of the Westchester County Board of Legislators. “This ban is a huge achievement in protecting our children and families by taking a firm stand in stopping the cycle of addiction that has been perpetuated by the tobacco industry for generations. Enough is enough.”

“Smoking and tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the U.S.,” said Legislator Chris Johnson, Majority Leader of the Westchester County Board of Legislators. “We also know that the tobacco industry aggressively advertises these products to young people and other vulnerable communities like the ones that I represent in the North County. This ban on flavored tobacco, I am proud to be able to do my part to make Westchester healthier for all.”

“Westchester is fighting for the health of our young people and the future generations,” said Dr. Hazel N. Dukes, President of the NAACP State Office. “I am proud to be able to do my part to make Westchester healthier for all.”

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Westchester County District Attorney Miriam E. Rocah announced that Peekskill resident Shane Gilleo, 30, left, was indicted on charges connected with the murder of his step-father Edward Reeves in Peekskill. The defendant is being held without bail. The defendant was indicted by a Westchester County Grand Jury for Murder in the Second Degree and Arson in the Third Degree, both felonies.

The defendant was arraigned in Westchester County Court on Nov. 18, 2022.

On Sep. 14, 2022, at approximately 12:30 a.m., the defendant allegedly stopped his vehicle at a gas station at 161 North James Street in Peekskill. The victim was transported to Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, where he died. It is further alleged that at approximately 11:20 a.m., the defendant stabbed the victim multiple times with a knife on North James Street in Peekskill. The investigation is pending, following an investigation with the assistance of the Westchester County Department of Public Safety.

On October 30, 2022, the New York State Police from the Hawthorne barracks arrested four individuals for illegal possession of two handguns on Tuckahoe Road in the city of Yonkers. At approximately 6:25 p.m., Troopers observed a BMW 440 traveling in excess of 100 miles per hour on the Sprain Brook Parkway. The suspect, later identified as the driver, was followed to Tuckahoe Road where a traffic stop was initiated. Investigation found two loaded handguns in the vehicle, a .380 Ruger LCP, and a 9MM Smith & Wesson 9mm.

Jalen S. Young, age 19, of Valley Stream, NY, was arrested for Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the 2nd degree, a class D felony. Deandre A. Bowen, age 21, Kevin E. Hill, age 21, and Daijaun J. Jarvis, age 20, all of Queens, NY, were arrested for Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the 2nd degree, a class C felony. All four subjects were arraigned before the Honorable Judge Best of the city of Yonkers in Justice Court.

In Katonah, Wrestling Coach Bill Swertfager appeared before the school board meeting on Oct. 26, 2022. The, Swertfager, who has 32 years of experience. The superintendent's investigator only interviewed and took written statements from the principal, the athletic director and Swertfager himself. If the superintendent decided to fire a coach with 32 years of coaching experience, that would be a huge mistake, Swertfager said.

At the school board meeting, Coach Swertfager called his action, acknowledging that he patted a player on the back for a good hit. "It's a normal thing," he said. "Anybody that would say that was inappropriate has no idea of experience. The superintendent's investigator only interviewed and took written statements from the principal, the athletic director and Swertfager himself. If the superintendent decided to fire a coach with 32 years of coaching experience, that would be a huge mistake, Swertfager said."

On Monday, Oct. 24, 2022, the Katonah-Lewisboro Board of Education met to discuss whether to reinstate Fred DiCarlo as head varsity basketball coach at Eastchester High School. The decision was made after the board voted to fire coach Fred DiCarlo.

"I am very disappointed with the decision," DiCarlo said. "I have been coaching at Eastchester for 25 years, and I have never been disciplined by the athletic director or the principal. I have never been suspended, or had a meeting with the athletic director.

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Two Beloved Coaches, continued from pg 1-

Lehman School Districts are now feeling the heat, and pressure, from the public to fire Eastchester Basketball and Football coach Fred DiCarlo, and Katonah Wrest-
Westchester Board of Legislators to Hold Budget Hearings

On Thursday, County Executive George Latimer introduced the proposed Westchester County budget operating budget for the Westchester County Department of Legislators (BOL). By County Charter rule, this budget must be submitted no later than November 15 each year. With the submission of the operating budget, the BOL will launch a series of community budget hearings on Monday, November 14. For the first time, representatives of all County departments and offices make presentations to and take questions from the Budget & Appropriations Committee. Additionally, the BOL will host two public hearings throughout the County and one statutory public hearing at the Board of Legislators’ Chamber in White Plains. Participants will be allowed to speak and provide public comment at all hearings.

The details for the public hearings are as follows:

- Wednesday, November 16, 2022 at 7 PM (live streamed via Facebook)
  New Rochelle Public Library (Osage Davis Theater)
  1 Library Plaza New Rochelle, NY 10801

- Wednesday, November 30, 2022 at 7 PM (live streamed via Facebook)
  Chappaqua Performing Arts Center
  480 N Bedford Rd, Chappaqua, NY 10514

Information regarding the FY23 budget delibations can be viewed on the Budget Dashboard section of the BOL website. The dashboard will include relevant details such as the Webex remote participation instructions, budget meeting schedule, and links to view the proposed operating, capital, and special districts budgets.

Brother-Sister Win Middle & HS Scholarships in Rye Free Reading Room Spelling Bee

Lattine, County Budget, continued from pg 1--

RATING AGENCIES

The 2023 Budget increases the “rainy day fund” to about 19% of County operating expenditures, a bold way to stabilize the bond ratings for the County. Latimer said: “For the past four consecutive fiscal years, our administration has been able to propose an Operating Budget that included a cut to the County property tax levy. Westchester County also boasts a AAA-, AA+ and A1 rating by Standard and Poor’s, Fitch and Moody’s, respectively – among the highest ratings awarded by any bond rating agency. These successes are due in no part to the professional work of the Westchester County Department of Finance. Finance Commissioner Karen Holloway stated: “I applaud the County Executive for submitting a balanced budget that also includes another consecutive year of a cut to the County property tax levy. This has been the hallmark of our administration over the past two years, while continuing to offer the services needed and sought out by its residents. The fiscal fiscal stability that the County Executive has proposed for the upcoming year will position Westchester County as a financially stable entity for years to come.”

PUBLIC SAFETY / CORRECTIONS / PROBATION

In a record setting year, the Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, and Department of Probation funded at the highest level they have ever been funded in Westchester County history – a total of $260.9 million. This includes:

- Correction $156.6 million
- Public Safety $59.1 million
- Probation $45.2 million

This allocation in the Budget includes:

- Maternal Mortality $1 million
- Federally Qualified Health Centers / Neighborhood Health Centers expansion $1 million

Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler said: “The Health Department has devoted a considerable amount of its resources over the past two years to its COVID response. This budget will allow the Department to refocus its attention on core public health priorities and inequities.

COMMUNITY HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH

The Westchester County Health Department accounts for $220.8 million in the Operating Budget, and $17.2 million for the Department of Community Mental Health (DCMH).

Health Budget includes:

- Maternal Mortality $1 million
- Federally Qualified Health Centers / Neighborhood Health Centers expansion $1 million (total $3 million)

Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler said: “The Health Department has devoted a considerable amount of its resources over the past two years to its COVID response. This budget will allow the Department to refocus its attention on core public health priorities and inequities.

DCMH Budget includes:

- Project Alliance Mobile Crisis Response Team, Crisis Network and 988 Suicide Crisis Lifeline ($6.1 million)
- Opioid Response and Overdose Prevention Initiative ($565,000)
- Early Childhood Mental Health Services ($737,892)

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Budget includes:

- Federally Qualified Health Centers / Neighborhood Health Centers expansion $1 million (total $3 million)
- Ongoing Threat Assessment Management (TAM) Operations
- Two additional staff for Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP)
- To coordinate targeted upgrades for Hazmat in 2023

PARKS & RECREATION

Total amount in the Budget for Parks and Recreation $190.3 million. A combined $50.3 million has been allocated to the parks budget for improvements to the Playland and Playland Amusement Park. Additionally, $7.7 million has been allocated for Hilltop Total Community Center and Environmental Center, and $3.3 million for Cranberry Lake Preserve improvements

Latimer said: “As the construction of the County’s historic investment in Playland continues, we look forward to our park facilities that have suffered from underinvestment in the past.”

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The amount allotted for the Human Rights Commission in the Budget is $1.3 million. This includes an additional investigator.

YOUTH BUREAU

The county’s youth bureau funding is $4.7 million dollars. Among the new initiatives is an expansion of the Invest-in-Kids program to $250K.

L-R: Library Board of Trustee President Kathleen Riegelhaupt, Mayor Josh Cohn, Library Director Chris Shoemaker, and Rye patron Jacqueline Mecca. In front: winners Emma and Ryan Crozier

The Fifth Annual Rye Free Reading Room Spelling Bee Every Year, The Rye Free Reading Room invites Rye middle and high school students to come to the Library on Veterans’ Day to try their spelling skills. On November 11, 2022, Director Chris Shoemaker, joined by Library Board of Trustee President Kathleen Riegelhaupt, introduced the fifteen participants and thanked the judges/word readers Mayor Josh Cohn and Supervisor Jacqueline Mecca for coming.

After fourteen rounds, 6th grader Emma Crozier emerged as the middle-school winner by correctly spelling the word “Tafraut.” Other finalists failed to make spellings of “radon” (the chemical element) and “beedoon.”

This year it was a family affair. Both winners hailed from the same family and parents Jen and David Crozier were on hand to cheer them on. Emma and Ryan’s names will be inscribed on the permanent Spelling Bee trophy that is displayed in the main reading room at the Library. They will each be awarded a trophy and scholarship prize. The Library’s next meeting February 2023.

The $2.50 middle-school and $500 high-school scholarship prizes are sponsored by Camp Trends and in honor of Emanuela Racco, respectively.

For more information, go to www.ryelibrary.org or call 914-231-3161.

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New Rochelle Police Issue Arrest Warrant: Wanted for Murder

Eric Schoen, continued from pg 3-

Eric Schoen, 29 years of age, of New Rochelle has been designated as an agent of the LLC upon which process may be served. The address SSNY shall mail process to is:

125 Huntington Ave.
Hartford, CT 06103

NYSS designated as agent of the LLC upon which process may be served. 518-687-2020.

Notice of Warrant for Mtayari Z. Dixon, 29 years of age, from New Rochelle but currently known to reside in Stamford, Connecticut. The Warrant calls for full extradition from any U.S. State. Anyone with current information of his whereabouts are encouraged to call New Rochelle Police Detectives at 914-654-2300.

In New Rochelle, two men were shot to death on Wednesday night at 11:20 P.M. on the 1500 block of Park Avenue. According to New Rochelle Police, the victims were two men who had been walking together when a single loud shot was heard.

New Rochelle Police have arrested a suspect in the shooting death of two men in New Rochelle on Wednesday night. New Rochelle Police have identified the two men who were killed as Robert Johnson, 30, and John Smith, 29.

New Rochelle Police: 29-Year-Old From New Rochelle Shot to Death

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Transport for those with low income or who cannot provide their own transportation is available. See www.westchesterlibrary.org/know-how-to-use for more information. Transportation may be available at times other than the regular schedule.

HOMECARE UPDATE: ARREST WARRANT ISSUED

New Rochelle Police have a Warrant for Arrest of the homicide that occurred on October 26th, 2022, on Horton Avenue and Colonel Lee Archer Boulevard.

May 9, 2022.

The Warrant calls for full extradition from any U.S. State. Anyone with current information of his whereabouts are encouraged to call New Rochelle Police Detectives at 914-654-2300.

New Rochelle Times - Read us Online at Yonkerstimes.com

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The NY Post recently had the following front page headline and cartoon—

Trumpty Dumpty

In our January 18, 2019 newspaper, Westchester Rising, we printed the following drawing and poem.

Editor’s Note: Chris, a frequent caller into WVOX, 1460 AM, read this poem to me and gave permission to print it:

Trumpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Trumpty Dumpty could have a great fall
All the kings men and
All the kings horses
May not put our Country
Back together again

Cartoon by Katie Murphy

Westchester County Crime Stoppers has announced that it is offering a $7,500 reward for information that leads to an arrest and indictment in the unsolved murder of a Mount Vernon resident in June 2021.

Jeremy Logan was shot and killed while attending a memorial service near 266 South Fulton Avenue, Mount Vernon, on June 23, 2021 at 10:40 p.m. Mr. Logan’s mother attended the press conference with Crime Stoppers Chairman Derickson K. Lawrence, Mount Vernon Mayor Shawyn Patterson-Howard and Mount Vernon Police Commissioner Glenn Scott.

A relative of Logan, China Smith, asked for help from community members in finding whoever killed her nephew. “Unfortunately, Jeremy was gunned down by yet another coward in our community. Mount Vernon Police continue to try and identify the a suspect in this case, but need the community’s assistance. Those with information are asked to call Mount Vernon Police at 914-685-2510, or Westchester County Crime Stoppers at 1-800-898-TIPS.

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