



Robert P. Astorino, Westchester County Executive

NEWS RELEASE

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MUNICIPAL LEADERS APPLAUD ASTORINO PLAN TO PROVIDE DIRECT FUNDING FOR COMMUNITIES “HELD HOSTAGE” BY HUD

The mayors and county legislators for Peekskill and Port Chester are applauding the new program announced by County Executive Robert P. Astorino last week that will replace the federal community block grants that Department of Housing and Urban Development has been withholding from their communities.

In his State of the County Address, Astorino proposed that Westchester County start its own \$5 million block grant program for the communities being “held hostage” by HUD. The new program solves a number of problems.

- It will get money to local communities for revitalization projects.
- It will be affordable to county taxpayers. Financing a \$5 million program will cost each household in Westchester about \$1 dollar a year.
- And most important, it will remove the stranglehold that HUD has been using in its attempt to dismantle local zoning as it unilaterally tries to expand the terms of the county’s 2009 affordable housing settlement.

“HUD is currently unjustly punishing the municipalities that were not even part of the County’s federal housing settlement reach in 2009 by the prior administration,” said Peekskill Mayor Frank Catalina. “Peekskill has lost over a half million dollars in CDBG funding even though it is not part of the settlement because it already has a very diverse population and plenty of Affordable Fair Housing.”

Mayor Neil Pagano of Port Chester added: “The program that County Executive Astorino is rolling out is innovative and exciting. From 2011 through 2013, the Village of Port Chester was awarded in excess of one million dollars in CDBG for municipal infrastructure projects related to homeless prevention; sidewalk, sewer, and streetscape improvements; and youth development. But because of the impasse the CDBG funds were never released. I wholeheartedly support this very creative initiative.”

Both Peekskill and Port Chester combined were slated to receive \$ 1.85 million in CDBG funding before the faucet was turned off by HUD due to its claim that the County has not complied with the 2009 settlement.

Astorino cited HUD's "behavior over the past four years" as proof that HUD seeks to "erode local control over land use".

"CDBG have been HUD's prime weapon," said Astorino. "Withhold the money and wait for the county to capitulate on zoning. But that didn't happen and that won't happen while I am County Executive."

The new county program calls for \$5 million to be set aside for projects similar to the projects done under CDBG. Eligibility of projects will mirror the guidelines used by HUD but without the bureaucracy and pre conditions imposed by HUD.

Board of Legislators Minority Leader John Testa (R/C Peekskill) and Legislator David Gelfarb (R/C Rye) both expressed support for the measure.

"This fund will help the City of Peekskill move forward with much needed downtown improvements to sidewalks and the gazebo while protecting the local zoning from intrusion from bureaucrats in Washington D.C.," said Testa. "I am urging my colleagues on the Board of Legislators to support this initiative and help our local communities complete previously approved projects that have been put on hold due to HUD's arbitrary decision making," added Testa.

Gelfarb expressed similar sentiments. "Thanks to Rob and the Administration for putting together a program to benefit our local communities and their residents who have nothing to do with the ongoing problems with HUD," said Gelfarb.

Both Catalina and Pagano pointed to various projects their municipalities want to undertake that can now be funded. They include improvements to parks and streetscapes in downtowns.

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