

John G. Testa
Legislator, 1st District
Minority Leader



Committee Assignments:
Budget & Appropriations
Community Services
Economic Development
Energy & Environment
Legislation

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Republican Leaders Stunned by Democrats Vote to Block Affordable Housing

On Monday Democrats on the Westchester County Board of legislators voted against funding for 10 units of affordable housing in Mamaroneck. The ten units represented a significant step toward reaching the 750 units which the county is required to build under the 2009 fair and affordable housing settlement.

Republican Legislators were dismayed and confused as to why their colleagues who claim to want affordable housing throughout Westchester would block this important project with just six months left for the county to get 750 units approved with financing in place.

During the meeting the Democrat legislator who represents Mamaroneck took the lead in offering a specious argument as to why she blocked the affordable housing in her district. She claimed that it was a gamble to finance the units because the federal monitor in the settlement had not “pre-approved” them as counting toward the 750 unit requirement. Republicans found this argument to lack credibility since none of the units that have been approved by the Board of Legislators has ever been “pre-approved” by the Monitor and yet the Democrats voted for them. The Monitor has only challenged the permissibility of one affordable housing project that was approved by the BOL and that challenge was struck down by the judge overseeing the settlement. In Committee meetings to review the proposed funding, representatives from the County Attorney’s Office stated that they were confident that the Mamaroneck units would count and were well-prepared to defend the project’s validity in court if necessary. Further proving the insincerity of the Democrats claims, on the very next vote at the BOL meeting, just 2 minutes and 20 seconds after the five Democrats voted to block the affordable housing in Mamaroneck, they voted in favor of affordable housing in Pound Ridge, a project which also did not have a pre-approval from the Monitor.

During the meeting, Minority Leader, Legislator John Testa (R) Peekskill said, “If members have some ‘inside’ information why not share it with us now? No one from HUD or the Monitor has publicly stated any doubts. Besides, the only time the Monitor raised an objection that certain units should not be counted was with the Conifer project in New Castle, and in the end, the federal court overruled him and said they do count.”

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Minority Whip, Legislator Gordon Burrows (R) Yonkers, said, “If on December 31st the County stands at 740 units, ten units short, and incurs the heavy fines, I will hold each of you that voted to defeat this measure responsible and let every taxpayer know who was responsible for putting the county in non-compliance.”

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