

John G. Testa
Legislator, 1st District
Minority Leader



Committee Assignments:
Budget & Appropriations
Environment, Health & Energy
Legislation
Rules

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Contact: Matt Richter, 646-302-2220, mjr3@westchestergov.com

Republican Legislators Stand with Taxpayers, Vote “No” on Tax Increase Budget

On Monday, The Westchester County Board of Legislators (BOL) passed the 2019 county budget by a vote of 13-4. The BOL’s three Republicans and one Conservative member voted against it.

The budget calls for a 2% property tax increase, a one-shot revenue of \$23 million for the sale of parkland, borrowing \$8.5 million for tax certioraries and using \$8 million of health fund reserves. The budget also carries an increase to fees for residents who use county parks and a major increase to license fees for home improvement contractors and other small businesses.

Minority Leader John Testa, (R) Peekskill, Cortlandt, Yorktown has long advocated for the county to pursue private partnerships to generate ongoing revenues instead of raising taxes and fees on homeowners and small businesses. “I cannot vote in favor of a budget that takes more money out of the pockets of Westchester County families while there are fully vetted and approved private partnerships available to us on major projects like, rehabilitating Playland, building a \$1.2 billion bio-science center and a bipartisan deal to unlock tens of millions of dollars through a public-private partnership to operate the county airport.” Testa added, “For a year now, I have repeatedly asked my colleagues on the Board as well as the County Executive to move ahead with these smart, and thoroughly vetted partnerships. Their preference to sell off parkland and raise taxes instead is baffling to me. Their only fallback position is expecting the NY State delegation to extract the approval for a significant county sales tax increase in Albany. There is no guarantee or any communication from our State representatives that they would support such a regressive sales tax increase.”

Tel: (914) 995-2828 • Fax: (914) 995-3884 • E-mail: Testa@westchesterlegislators.com

Minority Whip Gordon A. Burrows (R) Yonkers, Bronxville, questioned the viability of the revenues that were included in the budget. “We have been given almost no information from the County Executive or the Board’s Democrats about how the sale of this parkland will take place. There has been no appraisal, there has been no opinion offered from Westchester’s State Legislative delegation about whether they are willing to cede the authority to the county to sell parkland. Parks advocates have stated on the record that they believe the plan is illegal.” Burrows said. “If selling the parkland is ultimately not allowed, what will happen? At least \$23 million in assumed revenues in this budget are far from certain and could very well mean a catastrophic hit to our reserve fund.”

Legislator Margaret Cunzio (C) Mount Pleasant, North Castle, Pleasantville, represents the district where the “North 60” bio-science center has been approved. “I cannot support this collection of tax and fee increases while a \$1.2 billion project which would bring tremendous revenue and high paying jobs to our county is being held up. The project has been approved unanimously by the BOL and the municipality and the developer is ready to start work.” Cunzio added, “Westchester County is home to a tremendously well-educated workforce and this project along with the Medical Center, Medical College and firms like Regeneron could make Westchester a leader in bio-science centered business globally.”

Legislator David Tubiolo (R - Yonkers & Mount Vernon), said his constituents simply could not afford additional taxes. "With the Federal government implementing its recent 'State And Local Tax Law' (SALT), now is not the time for a tax increase for our residents of Westchester, especially for seniors. Further, I don't feel comfortable supporting a budget that uses the proposed sale of the Westchester County Center parking-lot to fill a \$23 million hole."



Republican Caucus prior to budget vote

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