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October 21, 2021

Dear Friends,

Yesterday I hosted a Clean Water Grant Workshop to assist Westchester communities in applying for over \$400 million in state grants to help fund local clean water projects. Senior staff from the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) presented key information about the 2021 application process and answered questions from local officials. My goal in hosting this annual workshop is to maximize the ability of Westchester communities to secure funding from these clean water programs I have promoted within the legislature. Since 2015 Westchester projects have been awarded \$45.5 million in state grants.

Starting tonight I will be participating in the conference of the NYS Association of Conservation Commissions. The conference provides important information to local conservation board and sustainability committee members on issues faced by environmental committees around the state. One focus of the 2021 conference is resiliency.

This newsletter also provides news of settlement of the lawsuit regarding education funding statewide which memorializes actions we took this year in the state budget on Foundation Aid. I have championed the cause for school districts receiving less than their fair share of state aid. The budget commitment and settlement are important victories for districts deserving of additional funding in Westchester and throughout the state.

Next Monday I will be participating in a hearing of the Assembly Local Governments Committee on what adjustments to the NYS Open Meetings Law are appropriate following our special rules during the pandemic. My goal on these issues is to maximize public access to information, participation and involvement in the local decision-making process.

[Below you will find:](#)

- Expanded Services at Montefiore New Rochelle
- Clean Water Grant Workshop
- NYSACC Annual Environmental Conference
- Education Aid Lawsuit Settled
- Open Meetings Law hearing

Please contact my office at 914-939-7028 for help on any issue. My staff and I continue to help on flood, Covid-19 and the wide variety of issues that face every community.

Warm regards,

*Steve*



On Tuesday I participated in an important ribbon cutting at Montefiore Hospital in New Rochelle to mark the opening of the hospital's upgraded emergency and radiology facilities as well as their new Medical Group Health Center to provide primary care to area residents. New York State provided \$44.3 million to support these upgrades. I joined Majority Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins, Senator Mayer, Mayor Bramson, County Executive Latimer and hospital officials at the event. In my comments at the ceremony, I reflected on the uncertainty New Rochelle's medical center faced over a decade ago and how the commitment of Montefiore and New York State today provide a [strong message](#) about maintaining and growing key medical services on the Sound Shore.



### Clean Water Infrastructure Grant Workshop

This week I hosted a Clean Water Infrastructure Grant Workshop with staff from NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation to provide Westchester local governments, environmental groups and engineering firms with information on the 2021 state water grant applications now open for submissions. We have held this workshop in Westchester every year since the enactment of the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2015 to assist Westchester communities in securing grant funding from state programs.

The Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) is the state agency responsible for NYS's clean water infrastructure grants for local municipalities. The workshops have been very helpful in encouraging successful applications from across Westchester and for applicants to learn more about the process, application information specific to the current year funding round and background on other EFC programs.

The application round is now open. Grant applications must be submitted to **NYSWaterGrants@efc.ny.gov** no later than 5:00 pm on **Monday, November 22, 2021**. For additional information and to register for an upcoming webinar on Tuesday, November 2nd at 2:00 pm, please visit the EFC website at [www.efc.ny.gov](http://www.efc.ny.gov).

The 2021 grant round of funding was announced by Governor Hochul in

September. The biggest portion of the funding is \$400 million in grants through the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act program (WIIA) and the Intermunicipal Grant (IMG) program, which have received tremendous response by local governments, environmental and construction groups in helping upgrade our clean water infrastructure. An additional \$200 million is also being added to the Water Quality Improvement Project Program (WQIP) as part of the 2021 CFA funding round, which has already occurred. In addition, the governor announced that the Publicly Owned Treatment Works Asset Management Program will make \$10 million available to establish asset management programs that will help municipalities monitor, protect, and responsibly plan upgrades for wastewater infrastructure systems, at no cost. An additional \$5 million in Green Innovation Grant (GIG) Program funding will be available to communities that utilize unique stormwater infrastructure design and create cutting-edge green technologies to mitigate the impact of climate change.

My office is available to help applicants in this important funding opportunity and to support applications throughout the process. Applicants can contact the district office at 914-939-7028 for more information.



**NYS Association of Conservation Comissions**  
**Conference on the Environment 2021**

***Climate Resilience through Community Action: A Virtual Event***

This year's NYSACC annual conference will be held virtually from October 21st to 23rd and is aimed at providing municipal conservation commissions, advisory boards, sustainability committees and community activists from around New York State an opportunity to learn from environmental experts and networking opportunities. Attendance is free and the conference schedule is available

here: [VCOE Schedule](#).

I will be participating in the kickoff event on Thursday October 21st at 6:30pm for a legislative roundtable with several colleagues and will be the opening speaker on Friday morning. Workshops and roundtable discussions will be grouped into four topics main topics: Greening, Environmental Justice, Land & Water and Waste Not.

I was Chair of the City of Rye Conservation Commission in the 1990s and have remained on the NYSACC Board of Directors since that time. I have attended many of the traditional in person NYSACC conferences across the state over the years. To learn more about this free virtual event, visit: <https://www.nysacc.net>

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### **School Aid Commitment in State Budget Affirmed in Lawsuit Settlement**

Last week Governor Hochul announced that New York State has reached an agreement to settle the lawsuit brought to require New York State to fully fund Foundation Aid to New York's school districts as was originally committed over a decade ago. The new settlement memorializes our victory in the state budget adopted earlier this year to phase-in full funding of Foundation Aid over the next three years. Foundation Aid is the main category of state aid to school districts. After the fiscal crisis of 2008-09, and related shortfalls in state revenues, Foundation Aid was not fully funded for many school districts around the state. In the FY 2022 Enacted State Budget approved in April, we agreed to fully fund Foundation Aid by the FY 2024 budget and enshrined this commitment into law.

Over the last several years, I led an effort during the legislative budget process to increase the level of Foundation Aid to the low percentage Foundation Aid school districts in Westchester and throughout the state. In recent years this effort succeeded in securing increased funding for these districts in adopted state budgets by driving more funding to the districts that had been short-changed. The commitment in this year's budget and settlement of the litigation is the culmination of these efforts.

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### **Assembly Hearing on Open Meetings Law**

The pandemic forced changes to the NYS Open Meetings Law that changed how local municipal meetings were conducted and how the public could access and

participate in those meetings. The current temporary rules are set to expire on January 15th. Many of the remote meeting rules offer new options to increase public participation through remote technologies. It is also accurate to say that the pandemic open meetings law temporary rules created barriers to public access and participation in local government decision-making.

To address these issues, the Assembly Local Governments Committee, on which I serve, is holding a public hearing to discuss which, if any, pandemic related rules should be retained and what changes are necessary to better protect public participation and access to information as envisioned by the open meetings law. I have followed these issues closely and would appreciate your views about how we proceed.

Please take a look at the [linked hearing notice](#) to be held on Monday, October 25th and consider coming to Albany to testify or provide the committee with your written comments.



**Area Pop Up Vaccine Clinics:**

- October 22, 2021 from 2:30 pm - 5:30 pm
  - **Highlands School**, Middle School Gym, 128 Grandview Avenue, **White Plains**, NY 10605
- October 27, 2021 from 3:30 pm – 6:30 pm
  - **Columbus Elementary School**, Gym, 275 Washington Ave, **New Rochelle**, NY 10801
- November 13, 2021 from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
  - **Rye High/Middle School**, Middle School Gym, 3 Parsons St. **Rye**, NY 10580
- **Ongoing Vaccine Clinics:**
  - **White Plains Vaccination Clinic**  
134 Court St., White Plains

Fridays from 10-1pm

Walk-ins accepted; offers Pfizer

Westchester County Department of Health will be holding **Pfizer vaccine booster clinics**, by appointment only, every Wednesday and Thursday, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, at 134 Court Street in White Plains. To be eligible to **receive a Pfizer booster dose**, you must have completed your original Pfizer vaccine series **at least six months ago and you must fall into one of the following categories:**

- 18+ who lives or works in a [high-risk setting](#)
- 18+ with [underlying medical conditions](#)
- 65 years and older



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