



Rockland County Legislator Aron B. Wieder

District 13, Majority Leader
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Wieder Holds The Line On Taxes

Every December, the Rockland County Legislature passes a budget after a lengthy process involving numerous county officials, including the County Executive.

As your legislator, I am always working to prevent higher taxes as much as possible, and therefore I worked hard to push for a budget with a minimal tax increase.

The proposed 2014 budget included a nearly 10% tax increase, which I thought was far too high for residents.

After all the discussions, the tax increase remained, so I decided that I could not support such a hefty tax hike and voted against the entire budget. Even after the budget was approved, there were some changes proposed that would have further increased spending and taxes. I voted against those measures as well.

I believe the county needs to take certain actions, some of which I detail in this newsletter, to reduce the cost of government so that property taxes can fall.

Unemployment Falls

While the national unemployment rate hovers around 7%, the unemployment rate in Rockland is falling tremendously. In December 2012, the unemployment rate in the county was 6.7%. Currently, the unemployment rate is 4.9%.

Rockland's unemployment rate is the fourth lowest in the entire state, and we must do all we can to ensure it stays low. As a member of the legislature's Economic Development Committee, I routinely work with business leaders and others to make Rockland a more attractive place to do business.

By continuing to attract new businesses here, and doing everything we can to keep businesses in Rockland, we can ensure our residents remain employed and keep our economy strong.

Honoring A Driver Who Returned A Missing Wallet



Late one recent evening, a constituent contacted me to report that he was certain that earlier that evening he left his wallet that contained a substantial amount of money and important documents in a taxi.

I contacted Pastor Yvon Y. Louis and requested his assistance to contact Jean M. Andre, the owner of La Familia, a Spring Valley cab service. Through company records, Mr. Andre was able to determine that the taxi was operated by company employee, Mr. Henri Jean, who searched

the cab and discovered the wallet under the seat. The wallet and its valuable and irreplaceable contents were returned intact to the constituent and not a single dollar was missing.

The actions of these three individuals in springing to action to assist a person in obvious distress is admirable, and I was proud to honor them at the legislature. This is an example of individuals who are concerned about the plight of others and who reflect the values of this caring community.

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Pascack Brook Flood Remediation Interview

In August, a groundbreaking ceremony took place to mark the beginning of a major multi-million dollar flood mitigation project by the Pascack Brook. Residents in the area of Francis Place and Stonehouse Drive have been suffering from severe flooding for decades, and this project will finally put an end to that.

For this newsletter, Legislator Aron Wieder, Rockland County Drainage Agency Director Vince Altieri, and KS Engineers Supervisor Boris Vays sat down to answer questions for the community about the Pascack Road Project.



Legislator Aron Wieder meeting with the leaders of the Pascack Brook flood remediation project. (L to R) Bill Luchkiw of the Drainage Agency, Boris Vays, and Charles Schattler of Metra Industries.

Q: What is the ultimate goal of this project?

Wieder: The ultimate goal of the project is to mitigate flooding to approximately 80 homes along the Pascack Brook in Spring Valley from the lower Francis Place crossing of the brook, to the end of King Terrace. This will also impact hundreds of people who travel on Union Road, a key thoroughfare, on a daily basis. The bypass culvert should be able to move enough water to solve the problem.

Q: What is the timetable for this project?

Altieri: The project should be complete by the Summer of 2015.



On March 27th, Legislator Aron Wieder met with the project managers as part of the culvert was delivered.

Q: What has been done so far?

Vays: To date, the contractor has had several shop drawings (detailed drawings of pre-fabricated concrete structures) approved and the pieces have been submitted for fabrication. Many of the pieces have already been fabricated. Trees have been cut and silt fence installed along the project boundaries. Excavation for the new sanitary sewer pipes has begun.

Q: Can you explain the role of the new culvert involved?

Altieri: The new culvert will act as a bypass for flood waters up to the 100 year storm. When the water in the brook starts elevating during a storm, the water above a natural flow will pour into the culvert that runs parallel to the brook, and then the culvert will reintroduce the water to the brook at the end of King Terrace, where a steeper slope will allow the water to move downstream without flooding the area.

Q: How effective in preventing flooding will this project be?

Vays: It will be very effective, and since we are constructing a bypass rather than simply burying the brook in place, residents will have the benefit of both the stream and

the culvert during major rain events.

Q: What can the public expect while this project is ongoing?

Wieder: As with all major infrastructure projects, there will be heavy construction involved that will limit traffic flow in the area at times. People should look out for possible detours and pay attention to flag-waving traffic enforcers. It is important that the public remain patient, but I can assure everyone that unlike in the past, this project will be completed and the issues will be resolved.



Vince Altieri, Legislator Aron Wieder, and Legislator Ilan Schoenberger at the project's groundbreaking.

Wieder Elected Majority Leader

This year, I was elected by my colleagues to serve as the Majority Leader of the legislature. I also appointed Legislator Toney Earl to be the Deputy Majority Leader.

I am thankful to my colleagues for their confidence in electing me their leader, and I hope to be able to use this position to restore responsibility in our finances and confidence in our residents.

Addressing the financial crisis is my top priority as a legislator and as majority leader. I will continue to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure that

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mechanisms are in place to pay off our entire deficit and prevent future deficits.

In my acceptance speech after being selected, I did not shy away from discussing the issue of unity among Rockland residents. There are many issues that divide Rocklanders, and I know that residents are concerned about the state of government itself, as well as key issues that affect their daily lives.

Rocklanders should not have to

spend their days seized by angst and uncertainty about the state of public affairs in their community. I believe that solving our problems begins by building bridges, and the issue of disunity in our county is the true crisis we face.

I challenge everyone to work together on all fronts for the success of all Rockland residents, and I have committed myself to do the same. If we do, I believe that will enable us to improve our government and set us on a path to resolve all issues we face - no matter how difficult they may be.

Wieder Coordinates Search For Missing Person

After a Rockland resident went missing, numerous community groups sprang into action to find him.

Chaverim, Hatzalah, and other groups, as well as numerous police departments, worked together to locate the missing person.

During these efforts, I was proud to be the family's liaison. As a county legislator, I also worked to coordinate the volunteers and acted as a liaison to the media.

We were able to get the word out to encourage people to look for him on a wide scale.

Unfortunately, the search ended in a tragedy. A hiker found the

missing individual after being made aware of the search effort of the volunteers.

However, what we saw during this time were the incredible acts of selflessness on the part of everyone involved in the search efforts, who spent thousands of hours collectively searching for him.

We truly have an

incredible community of people who care for one another, and it is a



Legislator Aron Wieder leading a press conference during the search for a missing resident.

great honor to represent so many brave and selfless residents.

More Parking At Monsey Park & Ride



In January, the Rockland County Legislature formally approved a plan to increase the number of parking spots at the Monsey Commuter Park & Ride facility. The facility, located on Route 59, currently has 290 parking spots- and that number will grow to 360.

I know that many of my constituents utilize this important lot on their way to work every

day. This lot serves hundreds of residents who board buses to New York City, and ensuring that transportation options are open to residents who commute is critical.

Work on this started in early 2013, and striping of the lot will take place in the spring. No county tax dollars were used to fund this project—it was paid for with TDM funds. TDM, or Traffic Demand Management, is a program funded jointly by the state and federal government.

Reuniting My Grandmother With Her Liberator—An American Hero

One of the most poignant moments of my time in office came in November, when I was able to reunite my own grandmother with the man who liberated the concentration camp that she was held in during the Holocaust.

When he was 18, Alan Moskin was a soldier in the 71st Infantry Division, serving in General George Patton's Third Army. In May of 1945, Mr. Moskin's unit liberated the 15,000 Jews imprisoned in a forced labor camp in Guns kirchen, Austria. My grandmother, Rosia Schwartz Farkas, was held in that camp.

Legislator Murphy and I discovered the connection between my grandmother and Mr. Moskin after conversing at a veterans event. By further coincidence, explained Legislator Murphy, Mr. Moskin is one of the 1.7 million U.S. Army troops shipped to Europe from Orangeburg's Camp Shanks, the largest

point of WWII embarkation camp in the United States processing Army and Air Corps overseas.

It was decided immediately that the two needed to be reunited, and we held a very touching reunion in the chambers of the county legislature. Alan Moskin was also presented with a Distinguished Service Award for all of his work, including teaching children about his experiences.

At the ceremony, Legislator Murphy remarked, "To witness these two people, each having survived the brutality of the war, meeting after 70 years, a lifetime for many, is a surreal and a very emotional experience."

The reality is that if not for bravery of Mr. Moskin and his fellow soldiers, my grandmother, along with the 15,000 Jewish prisoners would have been killed in the gas chambers and been turned in to ashes by the barbaric Nazi regime.

If not for Alan, my entire family and I would not be alive today. I will always be thankful to Mr. Moskin and his fellow soldiers for liberating my dearest grandmother and her family members. He is a true American Hero.



Legislator Aron Wieder with Alan Moskin.

Eliminate My Entire Salary!

I have proudly proposed legislation asking that my salary as a county legislator be eliminated. The proposal I made along with fellow Legislator Frank Sparaco, would eliminate my salary, as well as the salaries of all 17 legislators and the county executive, until the entire deficit of the county is eliminated.

I put this idea forward to highlight my commitment to eliminating Rockland's deficit, and to shed a light on the importance of this critical issue.

The legislation I proposed aimed at eliminating salaries for county elected officials is important because it will ensure that all officials work together and focus on the elimination and prevention of our deficit—and that must remain our top priority.

End The Deficit: Sell Summit Park & More

The Rockland County deficit now stands at roughly \$130 million. On top of that, our deficit costs county taxpayers more each year—as it grows and as past deficits remain unpaid. While I believe that the \$96 million deficit bond approved by the governor and state legislature is a step in the right direction, in order to permanently address the deficit, we need to do more.

One answer lies in selling the county-owned Summit Park Nursing Home and Hospital. These facilities cost taxpayers a great deal of money, and often operate with deficits. As a legislator, I supported the idea of selling Summit Park so that we can use that revenue to pay off our deficit and prevent tax hikes.

Recently, I supported giving a new county-created Local Development Corporation the right to move forward with a sale so that we could have a more efficient and less expensive county government by having funds to offset our deficit. I believe that when these facilities are sold, we will be in much better financial shape in the long run.

Beyond Summit Park, we need to develop long-term financial changes in the structure of county government that can stop these deficits from growing, and prevent them from occurring again. I continue to work with my colleagues to find innovative ways of addressing that challenge and reinventing county government. I hope that our county executive will join me in this important endeavor.

I always appreciate your comments or suggestions.

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