



Rockland County Legislator Christopher J. Carey

Minority Leader, District 9

Summer 2015



Cracking Down On Illegal Housing

Illegal housing is a major issue affecting Rockland County, and it poses a great threat to public safety. Houses that are subdivided illegally by unscrupulous landlords are becoming more common, and so are fires in such homes.

I asked Gordon Wren, the Director of Rockland County Fire and Emergency Services, to make a presentation to the legislature about the dangers of such housing violations.

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Carey Re-Elected Minority Leader

Earlier this year, I was re-elected to the position of Minority Leader of the Rockland County Legislature during the annual reorganization meeting. This is the third consecutive year that I have been selected for that leadership post.

It is once again a great honor to have been chosen by my Republican colleagues to be the leader of the minority caucus. Though we are the minority in the legislature, we will work together with everyone to address Rockland's shared challenges.

Supporting A Monitor For East Ramapo

We all know that the situation in East Ramapo schools is deplorable and getting worse. For years, the district has cut public school programs and laid off teachers and needed staff. The social cost of these cuts is even greater, and the entire issue has created a great strain in our county.

As a legislator representing over 500 homes in the East Ramapo Central School District, I have long believed that major reform and oversight was needed in the district in order for it to recover and rebuild itself.

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Carey Fights For Fiscal Responsibility

It's no secret that our county has been in financial trouble for some time. Over the last few years, the legislature has taken steps to address those issues and put our government on the path to financial recovery.

Despite the progress that has been made, there is still a long way to go. That is why it is imperative that our budgets reflect our values—the values of financial stability and responsibility. When the 2015 budget was introduced, I proposed an important compromise that would have made needed cuts while preserving our key services— all while staying within the state's tax cap.

While I fought for those cuts and savings for taxpayers, the final budget proposal did not include them. Ultimately, I voted against the budget, because I believe we could have done more to reduce spending and tackle our debt instead.

With over \$130 million in debt, we must continue to focus on that when preparing our budgets, or else we risk erasing the gains of progress we have made.

I will continue to propose ideas to make our county more fiscally responsible and reform our budgets to ensure that they are as streamlined and disciplined as possible for taxpayers.

Opposing The Overdevelopment At Pascack Ridge

Although Rockland residents live in five different towns, we all live in one county. That is why it is important that all towns make development decisions that respect each town and don't impact others.

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Cracking Down On Illegal Housing

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The presentation included photos of homes that were illegally subdivided to renters who stayed together in tightly-spaced rooms with numerous mattresses spread across the floors.

These homes caught fire more easily, and those fires spread fast. Firefighters who entered the homes had no idea that there were numerous residents inside, and the burning mattresses made it more difficult and dangerous for firefighters to save the residents and extinguish the fire.

Recently, County Executive Ed Day launched the Rockland Codes Initiative, which will uncover illegal housing across Rockland. Residents will be able to report suspected cases

of illegal housing, and the task force will conduct inspections, and levy fines and penalties accordingly.

Using social media, the landlords with the greatest violations will also be publicized on the "Worst Landlords Watch List."

I believe that there should be uniform fines across Rockland County for all illegally subdivided homes in order to dissuade individuals from creating illegal housing.

We need fines that are severe enough to put an end to this incredibly dangerous practice that threatens the lives of tenants and firefighters every day.

There is a great deal to do to combat illegal housing on many fronts, and I intend to continue working with my colleagues until this crisis has been resolved.

Questionable Use Of Sewer Funds In Clarkstown

A few months ago, the Rockland County Sewer District passed a resolution for \$2.5 million in bonding to build a storage garage on Route 304 for emergency sewer equipment.

The Town of Clarkstown also passed its own resolution about the same garage. The town resolution made no mention of the Sewer District's resolutions, and the district's resolution made no mention of the town's resolution, but they were in fact the same project. Many were pushing for the garage to be shared with the Clarkstown Police Department, but it was the Sewer District that was going to pay for it all.

I asked for an opinion on whether or not this was a permitted use of Sewer District tax funds from the County Attorney and the Sewer District's bond counsel. Both said it was illegal.

Fortunately, as a result of that clarification, Clarkstown backed out of the project. I questioned the need for the project if Clarkstown was not involved, but my peers approved it anyway.

Again, I asked for a ruling from the County Attorney and bond counsel whether combining police equipment and sewer equipment was legal, and their findings verified that it was illegal. I strongly opposed the project but it was approved anyway.

Supporting A Monitor For East Ramapo

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Recently, our state legislators drafted a proposal in Albany which would install a state-appointed monitor that could override the decisions of the school board. This legislation would go a long way to resolving the issues in the district, as moving forward, the monitor would have a say over what the school board could and could not do.

While the proposal naturally became controversial and drew the opposition of the school board majority,

I stood with the many who supported it. I also joined my fellow county legislators in signing a letter to Governor Cuomo in support of the legislation.

In the legislature, I signed on as a sponsor of a resolution supporting the East Ramapo reform bill, and worked to get that passed. It is important that Albany leaders hear from other elected officials in Rockland, and we made our voices clear in support of the bill to create a monitor. It is my hope that the state will pass this legislation.

Opposing The Overdevelopment At Pascack Ridge

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The proposed Pascack Ridge development, while in Ramapo, sits on the border of Clarkstown, right near my district. That is why I attended and spoke at three different public hearings in Ramapo Town Hall to express my opposition to this plan.

The proposal doesn't adequately address flooding issues that current-

ly exist in the area. This development will likely exacerbate those conditions, and because of its closeness to Clarkstown, will also impact residents in our town.

Governments and residents need to work together toward responsible development. We must carefully consider the impact these projects have on our quality of life, our natural resources, and our infrastructure.

Term Limits

Amid all the corruption scandals circling state and local government, reforms have been proposed that would prevent future corruption.

Key among these proposals was the implementation of limits on the number of terms that local officials can serve. Term limits would prevent politicians from becoming entrenched in their offices, which could lead to corruption and other abuses of power.

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We owe our veterans a lifelong debt of gratitude for their service and sacrifice. That is why I supported and lobbied for legislation known as the Alternative Veterans Exemption. The law provides a 15 percent reduction in the assessment of a res-

Veterans Tax Break

idential property that is owned by a veteran or a surviving spouse.

School boards vote on whether or not to extend this tax break to veterans. I spoke to the Clarkstown

School Board and asked them to pass this important exemption, and they did. I applaud them for their action, and I will continue to work on legislation that benefits our veterans.

Recognizing The Gaelic Athletic Association

In May, I was proud to present the Rockland Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) with a Distinguished Service Award, along with Legislator Patrick Moroney, in recognition of the GAA's efforts over the past 43 years to promote and bring recognition to Gaelic football and related Irish sports, as well as to nurture appreciation for Irish culture, heritage and traditions.

Association Chairman Vincent Tyer, Vice Chairman Marty McKenna and Club Coaching Officer Joe McGirl accepted the award on behalf of the GAA.

The club was established in 1972 by Irish émigrés who settled in Rockland and were determined that traditional Irish sports should be

passed on to their children. Today, the ever-growing membership consists of over 600 local youth from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

The club sponsors youth teams for boys and girls ages 6 and under through 18 years of age, and men's and women's teams that compete in Gaelic football, hurling and camogie. This program draws in youth and adults from all over the county and introduces them to the challenge of a different sport and allows those of Irish descent the opportunity to participate in a sport that is reflective and reminiscent of their ancestry, culture and tradition. The GAA has made enormous contributions to Rockland County and we are pleased to recognize that fact.

Rebuilding Hi-Tor

With the recent infusion of \$500,000 of New York State funds for the project to build a new animal shelter for Hi-Tor, we must work harder than ever to fill in the gap so that Hi-Tor can have the money it needs to build a permanent shelter.

That is why I supported the legislature's move to set aside \$500,000 in county funds to match the state funds obtained for this important project. With this, we are so close to achieving the goal of a new shelter.

However, by law, animal control is not solely a county function. While the county operates the Hi—Tor animal shelter, all towns and villages have contracts to provide services and support to the shelter as well.

That is why I believe it is imperative that all towns and villages work together with the county to support this important initiative and help fund the construction of the new animal shelter.

The shelter can and will be a model for other counties, and will finally resolve a long-standing issue in our county that touches on the very humanity we all share.



Presenting the Rockland Gaelic Athletic Association with a Distinguished Service Award. (L-R: Leg. Moroney, Marty McKenna, Joe McGirl, Vincent Tyer, Leg. Carey)

Term Limits

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That is why I proposed that Rockland County Legislators and the County Executive be limited to three terms, or twelve years, in office.

My proposal was discussed by the Rules Committee, which would need to approve major changes to our county charter. Unfortunately, the proposal did not move forward.

I fervently believe that we should implement term limits— not only in our county government, but in other levels of government as well— and I will continue to advocate for that.

Celebrating Our Community

I have always taken a great deal of pride in my community, and am proud to have been a civic leader long before I was elected to the legislature. I appreciate the incredible sense of community in our area, and the genuine interest on the part of so

many to support each other and work together to make Rockland a better place.

With so many incredible community groups and events I take part in, it is impossible to include an article on each. Instead, I have included

some pictures of different activities and events I took part in from around my district and Rockland County. I truly do love our town and county, and it is an honor to serve my great district every day as your legislator.



(Above)

I was honored to be able to present a Distinguished Service Award to Maureen Zeiss, who founded and runs a program that provides religious education to students with special needs in the St. Francis of Assisi parish.

During the presentation of the award, we were joined by some of the 50 young people who participated in the program, as well as their families.

The weekly classes are aimed at including those with special needs in Church services and the faith itself.

The work of this program, which began a decade ago, is incredibly important and valuable—not only to the Church, but to our entire county.



I was proud to join Legislator Patrick J. Moroney in presenting Certificates of Achievement to the members of the Albertus Magnus Girls Basketball Team and their coaches in recognition of an outstanding playing season that included a

25 game winning streak. The team won the Rockland County Section 1 Class A Championship, the NYS Regional Championship and was a semi-finalist at the New York State Championship held in March.



It continues to be a rewarding experience to serve as your Rockland County Legislator. Thank you for your trust and confidence as we work to make Rockland a better place. If you would like more information on these or any other issues, or need assistance: Feel free to call my office to (845) 638-5754, or e-mail me at CareyC@co.rockland.ny.us

CHRISTOPHER J. CAREY
County Legislator