



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WESTCHESTER, INC.

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2019 BUDGET STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters of Westchester commends County Executive George Latimer and his Administration for their fiscal pragmatism and demonstrated commitment to transparency in sharing the proposed 2019 County budget with the public. We appreciate the sound measures taken by the current administration and legislature to address the economic challenges they now face. We thank Budget Director, Larry Soule, for providing us with additional information and insight.

The League of Women Voters of Westchester has reviewed the proposed 2019 budget, and lauds the County Government's steps in finalizing union contract negotiations, and dealing with the heretofore unbudgeted financial cost of back pay in reparation for seven years of unfruitful negotiations. We applaud the steps taken to move forward with capital expenditure backlogs, prioritizing health and safety projects, and maintaining reserves at least at current levels without a reduction in services.

The League of Women Voters has been calling for a tax increase for some time. Following a "no tax increase" strategy for many years, our County's investment in people and hard assets had been drastically cut - which mortgaged our future. The current Administration needed to propose a property tax increase and chose the proposed 2% increase, rather than up to the 5.7% cap allowed by New York State. Limiting the property tax increase to 2% takes SALT, the federal deductible limit of \$10,000 in state and local taxes, and higher property assessments into consideration. Payment for County services represents only 15% of the property taxes and as such are the smallest piece of the property bill. Thus a 2% increment in the county tax bill translates into an increase of approximately \$5 per month for the average property owner.

We acknowledge that an even higher increase in property taxes may be necessary. As reported, the 2019 proposed budget is not balanced without the proposed sale of the County parking lot. LWVW questions the sale of an asset to use as a one-time revenue source. And if the proposed \$22 million sale of the County parking lot to the LDC does not go through for any reason, what is the contingency plan to replace the funding? The League endorses efforts by the Administration and Legislature to seek numerous avenues of continuous revenue-generating programs, rather than one-off transactions.

With the foregoing reservations, the League of Women Voters of Westchester supports the proposed efforts to resolve the County's extensive economic challenges, returning our County government to fiscal responsibility and spurring financial growth throughout the county.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marylou Green".

Marylou Green

President

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Adelaide DiGiorgi".

Adelaide DiGiorgi

Chair, County Government Study Committee