

Westchester legislators override 247 Astorino budget vetoes

WHITE PLAINS — In a rebuke of hundreds of County Executive Rob Astorino's line-item vetoes, the Board of Legislators signed off Thursday on a final \$1.78 billion Westchester budget. During a marathon of yeas and nays, legislators voted mostly along party lines and overrode 247 out of 249 vetoes taken up, a move that Astorino ripped and called "government by gimmicks."

Among items that didn't survive were \$500,000 for child-care **scholarships**, a \$2 increase in golf round fees, nine positions in the Information Technology department and a \$500,000 budget transfer from the Law Department to the Board of Legislators — that item was put off indefinitely.

"I'm satisfied with it," Legislator John Nonna, D- Pleasantville, said shortly after the meeting. "At some point, you have to make a decision, but the budget as a whole I'm satisfied with."

Legislators maintain that they sustained a 2 percent tax-levy cut and restored most of the items rejected by Astorino, including the Section 8 Housing Voucher Program, millions in revenues, dozens of county jobs and millions for community health centers, mental-health clinics and area not-for- profits. They say they ensured critical social **services** were maintained.

In the end, the budget will be nearly identical to the one the county board approved Dec. 10. Astorino, who last week told county lawmakers that he wasn't buying into their budget, offered a harsher assessment Thursday in that it included "runaway **spending** and speculative revenues."

In order to override, the board needed 12 votes. There are 12 Democrats and five Republicans on the board. "The Democrats had the 12 votes to override my vetoes," Astorino said. "This is how the democratic process works. They now have to be accountable for their votes."

This budget restores \$32 million of the \$33.5 million in spending that Astorino vetoed.

Board Chairman Ken Jenkins, D-Yonkers, called it a good day and said most social **service** programs were protected.

"Basically, the legislators kept the budget that we approved intact," Jenkins said.