

Westchester Democrats move up budget vote, expect Astorino vetoes

BY GERALD MCKINSTRY • GMCKINST@LOHUD.COM • DECEMBER 9, 2010

Anticipating that County Executive Rob Astorino will reject their budget, or at least parts of it, the Democratic chairman of the Westchester Board of Legislators moved up a vote on a 2011 budget.

Board Chairman Ken Jenkins, D-Yonkers, this week called for an earlier meeting, on Friday, changing the long-scheduled date from Monday because Democrats say they need more time to respond to — and presumably try to override — Astorino's anticipated vetoes.

It's a move backed by some Democrats, who need 12 votes for an override, though Republicans say it's just bad government and an attempt to ensure that all Democrats are available for an override. Nonetheless, it's another round in the ongoing political back-and-forth between parties.

"Given that there's going to be vetoes, we have got to **plan**," Vice Chairman Lyndon Williams, D-Mount Vernon, said Wednesday. "We're working in a very limited time frame. It gives us additional time to consider vetoes, whether it's line items or a full budget veto." The board must have a budget in place by Dec. 27.

Astorino can veto line items, or particular expenses, within five days of adoption. He has 10 days to reject the entire budget, which would extend the budget season into the holidays when some lawmakers would be on vacation.

Republican lawmakers maintain it's just another example of "shenanigans that turn people off towards **politics**." They say several legislators have other professional and personal commitments and have managed their schedules based on Monday's date, which was set by the chairman in January.

Minority Leader Jim Maisano, R- New Rochelle, for example, set up a trial date for his day job this week, on the premise of a Monday vote. "For 13 years, it's been like clockwork," Maisano said of the scheduled vote during his tenure. "It's outrageous that they would change the date without an explanation when that date has been set for an entire year." (*Maisano did not attend public hearings*)

George Oros, Astorino's chief of staff, said Democratic legislators' rationale for altering the date was just "bogus."

"There's definitely enough time for them to approve a budget," he said.