



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## New Laws from Harckham and Abinanti Benefit Mount Pleasant

PETE HARCKHAM December 28, 2020

| ISSUE: **SPECIAL ACT SCHOOLS, PROPERTY TAX RELIEF, MOUNT PLEASANT**



*Albany, NY* – New York State Senator Pete Harckham and Assemblyman Tom Abinanti announced today that two of their bills benefiting residents of the Town of Mount Pleasant—one ensuring Special Act schools are not financially penalized for reduced enrollment or operations because of the coronavirus pandemic; and the other allowing Mount Pleasant to impose a 3% hotel / motel occupancy tax—have been signed into law by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo.

“These two new laws will help mitigate the ongoing financial challenges, both immediate and long-range, our municipalities are facing because of the pandemic,” said Harckham. “We have to look for ways to protect and increase revenue meant to help residents, including students, and our focus on Special Act schools and a Mount Pleasant hotel lodging tax does exactly that. I am grateful for the governor’s support here, and also for Assemblyman Abinanti’s collaboration.”

“The hotel occupancy tax gives Mount Pleasant residents the same opportunity to supplement revenues with a non-property tax source as other communities have,” said Abinanti. “And the second new law ensures that Mount Pleasant’s Special Act schools do not lose any revenue they are entitled to because of the pandemic.”

The new law regarding Special Act schools (S.8014C / A.10193) affects nine public school districts in the state (six of which are located in Westchester County, three in the Town of Mount Pleasant) that educate underserved students who are unable to attend public schools in their communities because of disabilities, illnesses or behavioral challenges. Students attend either day or residential programs, and costs are divided between the students’ home school districts and their counties’ Department of Social Services.

The school budgets for the Special Act districts do not provide much leeway for unforeseen disruptions in aid, and a law was needed to make sure these districts would not be penalized financially or otherwise for missing mandated attendance criterion and instructional benchmarks caused by closings during pandemic. An earlier bill signed by Governor Cuomo had already protected the other public school districts across the state from similar penalties.

The three Special Acts school districts in Mount Pleasant are Hawthorne-Cedar Knolls, Mount Pleasant-Blythedale and Mount Pleasant-Cottage School.

The other new law (S.7741 / A.9959) authorizes the Town of Mount Pleasant to adopt a local law that will impose a room tax of up to 3% in hotels and motels not located in a village. The added revenue, which is expected to significantly increase once the sizable bioscience, technology and lifestyle campus opens on Westchester County's North 60 property (located in the unincorporated part of the Town), will help reduce already high real property taxes.