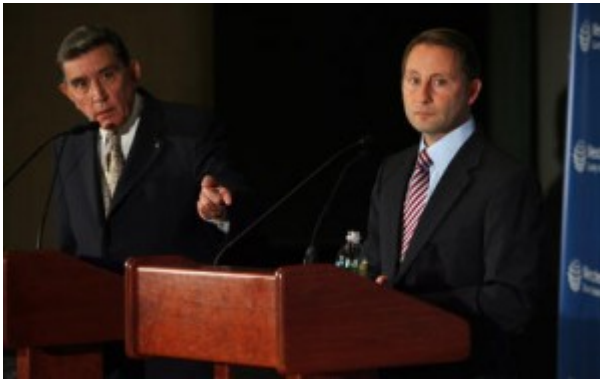




Spano, Astorino square off

Thursday, September 17th, 2009

Gerald McKinstry.



Affordable housing, taxes and the high cost of doing business in Westchester County dominated a debate this morning between the candidates for county executive.

In what was their first live debate, Republican Rob Astorino and Democrat Andrew Spano challenged each other's positions and records for more than an hour. Astorino ripped Spano's tenure repeatedly and pledged to reduce the cost of county government.

"Do you really think in years 13-16 things will change?" Astorino said, referring to Spano's seeking a fourth term.

"I think you have become so tone deaf, so out of touch, you have no idea what middle class families are going through," he said.

Spano defended his accomplishments and said Westchester was a model for counties around the country.

High taxes and rising costs for businesses were real problems, but not ones created by county government, he said.

"If you really want to get rid of taxes, you should be running for school board, not county executive," Spano said to Astorino.

They also touched on local government consolidation, Rye Playland, pension reform and their own professional experience.

Watch the debate in full at www.lohud.com/lohudlive1.

The debate was sponsored by the Westchester County Association and moderated by Richard French III of Regional News Network and Caryn McBride of the Westchester County Business Journal.