



COUNTY EXECUTIVE DEBATE
SPANO V. ASTORINO
September 17, 2009

WCA MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

Please pose a question that you would like to ask either County Executive Spano, challenger Rob Astorino or both of them. Feel free to put it in context of how the given issue impacts you personally or your business.

MEMBER COMMENTS:

What is the need for a County Government?

Does Astorino's strong "anti-choice" position have the potential to impact policy at the county level? (Are there any counseling programs that are funded by the county?)

The residents of Westchester County are tapped out. If Westchester County were a bank, it would be on the governments watch list.

Are either of you going to stop spending money you don't have. I don't even care where the money is spent, if you don't have it you have to say no. Stop overdrawing the county's check book.

CE Spano: Playland has been a financial drain on the County throughout your term, when accounted for under accurate accounting. It appears that it is maintained in its current status as a patronage work-site. Running an amusement park will never be a core-competency of government. Will you make a pledge right now that if re-elected, you will take action to entirely eliminate Westchester County involvement in that property and immediately eliminate all patronage positions at that site?

What specific plans do you have to increase / keep up with our counties need for electric power?

We already pay some of the highest electric rates in the nation, it is yet another burden on families and business.

Do you believe the Westchester County budget process gives the general public enough time to review the proposed budget and make comments?

Are you willing to invite CPA's, on a volunteer basis, into the budget process to assist?

Are you willing to take on the powerful union groups to create change in the pension system?

Ask Both: What have you done to increase the supply of affordable housing either in your community or the county of Westchester.?

Ask Both: With government pension costs soaring at all levels, do you support a move to create a Tier 5 pension plan for new hires?

Do you support revision to the County's Board of Acquisition and if not, why?

How can the County Executive work effectively with colleges and universities to bring stimulus funds to Westchester County?

what have you done ,Mr Spano to reduce govt costs and regulations over your term

What are your specific plans to reduce taxes

Why are our taxes the highest in the nation because it does not appear that we get any additional services for the money? If elected what will you do about raising taxes - in this economy it is not enough to say we live in the best county in the United States - and right after the last election, our taxes were substantially raised - doing so again will only cause people to move because they can't afford to stay - this is so especially for the elderly and one income families!

Why is it that as tax revenue goes down the city of white plains charges now for the Fire Dept. to evaluate commercial property health & safety. The only way we are going to get business back is to make it less costly to operate in the City. There was no notice given.

For Mr. Spano - Many Westchester county businesses (including printing shops and manufacturing plants) will subject to EPA fines of up to \$25,000 per day and forced to buy expensive new pollution control equipment because Westchester has been lumped with the five boroughs of New York City into one "non-attainment area" for ozone. Westchester was so classified based on a single monitoring point in North White Plains. Why did your administration fail to do anything to protect Westchester business from this outrage?

Why is county government necessary - are there services performed that could never be done by either municipalities or state government?

High taxes, business fees, liability exposure, operational restrictions, cost of power, cost of labor.... are all areas where we loose when compared to almost anywhere else.....we need incentives to even attempt to balance the playing field as we fight to attract deals in Westchester.

What plans to you have to fight in Albany for continuation and strengthening of economic development tools which are vital to attracting and retaining businesses in Westchester?

What is the value add to the tax payer for having a County government?

How can you justify a government that costs nearly \$2billion a year to run?

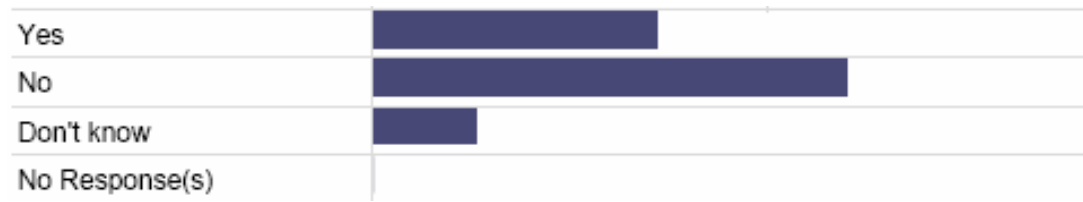
What is the County government doing better that the local governments can not?

What do you plan on doing to reduce the cost of county government in terms of jobs and salaries?

Please address your plan to expedite the development of affordable housing in the county. Not low-income housing, which has been the topic of recent news coverage...affordable housing for professional, young families who are needed to maintain a vibrant community. The lack of affordable homes, taxed at a reasonable rate has driven all but the highest paid employees North, East, and West...and the state of perpetual construction the surrounding highways and bridges remain in means 2-3 hour commutes. It is becoming impossible to attract top talent to the region.

What are your most compelling reasons for justifying County Government, and why it should/should not be re-structured to eliminate redundancy on the state and local level?

Do you think that the County's recent settlement with HUD mandating affordable housing in certain Westchester communities is a good decision?



MEMBER COMMENTS:

I don't think the government should mandate how we live in Westchester County.

I think it is a sad state of affairs that it had to go to court. Just do the right thing. We have hundreds of social programs that cost a fortune reduce them and get people homes they can afford.

Creating the environment that allowed the Federal government to "force" this resolution on the county was reckless.

The settlement is a sham, each community will fight individual developments eventually HUD will sue again.

Yes, increasing affordable housing should have been done years ago, not with a gun at the backs of county officials but through voluntary actions by all 45 communities in Westchester.

he should know better after partaking what occurred in Yonkers concerning the same subject-over 20 yrs

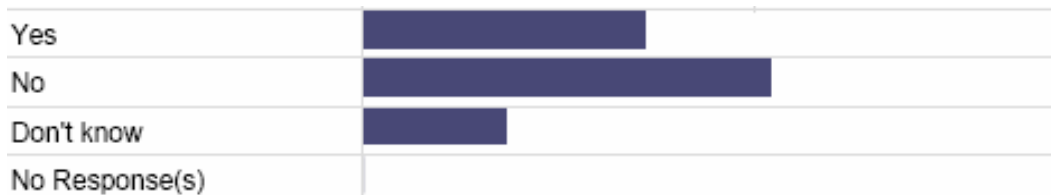
People tend to live in area's they can afford. Is it fair to have a lower income family live in a wealthy town when a middle class family cannot even afford to live there?

The problem is many of the individual towns, especially the northern communities will not deliver the affordable housing because the Town and Planning Boards don't support development. They should give builders incentives like additional density, rather than put the developer through an expensive environmental review process that is geared to reduce density.

Recently, Spano called on board of legislators to take a logical view rather than an emotional one. Let's finally look at the facts and recognize that Spano's administration has time and time again made illogical decisions that have backfired for County taxpayers.

This is the worst possible time to hit taxpayers with additional costs. You saw this coming. Why didn't your county government works with local towns and builders early on to meet criteria instead of letting this become a train wreck?

Regarding the HUD settlement, do you think your County legislator should support it?



MEMBER COMMENTS:

Don't raise my taxes to pay for it. Why should the taxpayers pay the penalty. Take it out of some other program.

Unfortunately, the legislature has shown little backbone for any issue that may offend the county executive. We are well protected against plastic bags and indoor tanning though!

If they don't support the settlement, the county will lose millions in federal aid.

Yes, and with a clear message to the communities that they need to deliver. Home rule will not work.

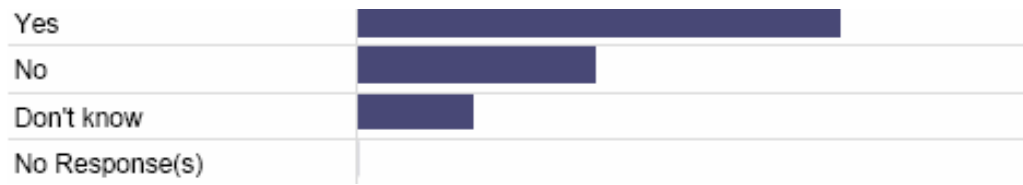
The Board must not let him off the hook this time. I urge the County Board of Legislators not to accept the plea bargain and expose Spano's poor leadership.

We should find other ways of helping folks instead of the costly solution outlined.

I don't know that they have a choice. It sounds like dragging it out will cost us more in the long run.

Yes, legislative representatives should do the right thing. It is unfortunate that it has not been a priority, and that it needs

Are you in favor of a countywide reassessment of property values?



MEMBER COMMENTS:

Since we have a County Government, that is the least they could do!

There is no question that I will move, and I pay \$20,000 in taxes, in upper Westchester, no less!

It's time.

I am in favor of the county spending less money not shifting the tax burden around.

Absolutely. Property assessments are out of whack with reality. Some communities have not reassessed since before World War II. Neighbors pay different property taxes even when their homes are virtually the same. The legal costs of defending certiorari cases are staggering.

Need more info.--I suspect it would be a good idea and should be done county wide on a periodic basis.

People need to see the true value of what the town thinks their property is worth in order to know if they should be challenging the assessment.

Let's do some cost-cutting first, and eliminate duplicate services, and bloated bureaucracy. Have a summit in regional areas of the county to consolidate costs. Public pensions and healthcare are too costly.

Something as to be done and it has to be major, across the entire county.

It's the only way to stop the constant certiorari. Lawyers are making money every year and the businesses and the municipalities are losing. Must be done countywide because individual municipalities will be reluctant to go it alone and risk getting hit with an unfair proportion of the county wide tax assessment

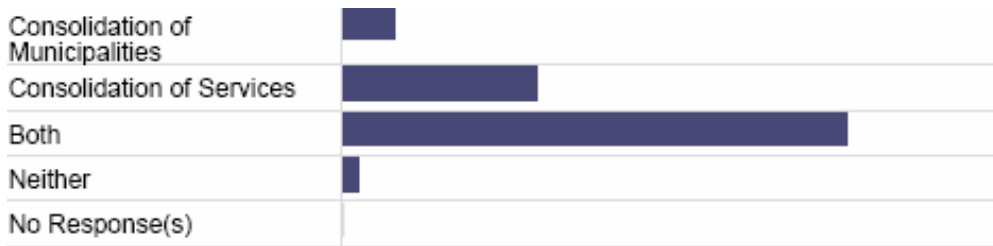
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Only if it means taxes go down. Which is like expecting the county to do anything to fix the Tappan Zee bridge.

Do you support consolidation of municipalities OR municipal services to control costs?



MEMBER COMMENTS:

But start with eliminating the County government!

There are; however, I don't have any confidence that the county or municipalities would be prudent and reduce taxes due to the savings. The County/municipality would just spend the savings. So what is the point?

It's time. Far too much duplicative efforts. Like Al DelBello says, do we really need 45 different tax collectors?

Lets start with services they are achievable

We should start by consolidating fire districts who no longer are manned by volunteers but by paid firefighters.

Adjacent communities should look into consolidating themselves.

not sure whether I could support consolidation of municipalities but would be willing to hear more arguments for and against.

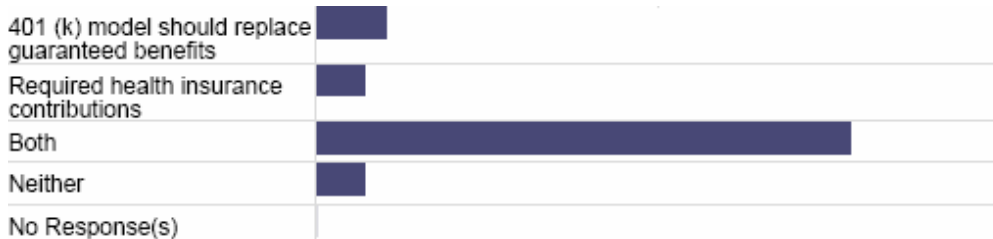
It would depend on the specifics and could vary from one community to another. It should be investigated,, but not mandated.

School districts, fire districts, post offices should be coincident with the geo-political boundary ant cross into neighboring jurisdictions. Example Lakeland school district should be separated at the county and Yorktown borders and consolidated with the Yorktown school district.

We need to stop growing our county government. We need to consolidate services and find ways to offer quality for less. We have too many government employees, paying too many pensions.

It does not make sense to have multiple smaller local governments. It is waste at its best.

Do you believe that the compensation structure for County employees should be modeled after the private sector- - i.e. 401 (k) type model instead of guaranteed pension benefits and county employees required to contribute to their health insurance as in the private sector?



MEMBER COMMENTS:

other day and saw our new County Police Horses supposedly to be used for Riot Control - are you kidding me?

Perhaps explain the need for the Department of Consumer Affairs? Handles maybe three cases per year.

Tax collection.

A study should be made to determine whether the Human Rights agency should be continued or should its function be returned to state government.

County Police Department should be consolidated into the NYS Police Department.

Playland should be privatized.

Playland

Planning Department
Office of Aging\HR\Social Svcs.

20 out of the 40 in existence....restructure annually depending on \$\$\$\$\$

Do we really need county police?

The usefulness of Board of legislators has run its course. The County government should be abolished and services should revert to the state or be funded such that the local consolidated municipalities are able to implement the services.

ELIMINATE COUNTY GOVERNMENT

police department
fire department
taxing authority
garbage/sanitation services
legal services

go through the county phone book. Anything that is already a service in the towns shouldn't be duplicated.

Town governments, Town tax authorities, police, fire etc

Why does the County government own a Farm in Yorktown to preserve old farming techniques?

Why does the County own and operate Rye Playland. I love the park but I don't think it is the role of government.

Why does the County have a passport office? That is the role of the Federal Government.

I'm sure there are others that I don't know about.

If the county is going to continue to take on supplying services, ie social services, police protection, sanitation, road repair, etc. then we need to not have duplication at the town and village level. It's one or the other, we cannot afford both - it is the duplication that is killing us!

Get rid of the County Legislature. The alleged legislators have turned a part time job into a full time job and enact useless legislation like bike helmets and tanning salons.

Town and Village engineering departments should be eliminated in favor of a single county wide engineering

department. It would cut duplication and provide uniform construction and construction oversight standards across the county.

County Government needs to be eliminated or at the very least significantly overhauled.

I'm sure I don't know enough to offer any constructive recommendations. I never could understand the office of the "County Executive." Mayor, Governor, Senator, Representative, Judge, Vice President, President, I get all of those. But "County Executive???" Like I said, I'm sure I don't know enough to comment.

The size, breadth, and scope of the machine is a bit daunting to me. If I had time to study it, I'm sure I would have a number of thoughts on the subject...but right now I'm devoting most of my time doing my part to keep my business afloat, commuting hours on plated roads, and tucking away whatever dollars I can, to send my kids to college...since I don't personally know anyone who works in government who will hand them a job, I expect that they'll need to prepare themselves for a life and career in the private sector...to pay for the livelihoods of all of those in the public sector.

No.

Re-evaluate the political structure and seats for greater efficiency.

TO VIEW THE DEBATE:

Thanks to our media host RNN-Regional News Network, the full debate will be aired on RNN-TV on September 18 at 6:00 pm.

You can also visit The Journal News website, www.lohud.com, for ON DEMAND coverage.



The Westchester County Association, Inc. 1133 Westchester Avenue, S217 White Plains, NY 10604
Tel: (914) 948-6444 web: www.westchester.org

