

Dance therapy
Class aids those with
mobility challenges
p 3

Ardley Heart
Group aims to boost sense
of belonging
p 5

33 years
Village administrator
retires in Irvington
p 11

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RIVERTOWNS Dispatch

Local News,
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WWW.RIVERTOWNSDISPATCH.COM ARDSLEY — DOBBS FERRY — HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON — IRVINGTON



Hands-on learning

Hastings High School teacher Marc Zelmanowicz and senior Tavia Seitz drag a seine net through Kinnally Cove as part of the Day in the Life on the Hudson and Harbor on Oct. 15. For the 23rd annual event, thousands of students collected data along the Hudson River and around New York Harbor. In Hastings, AP Environmental Science students fished with Zelmanowicz, tested water with science department chair Melissa Shandroff, and recorded the current and weather with physics teacher Austin Hills.

Burgos and Grados square off during League forum

BY JULIAN MICHAEL CALDWELL
IRVINGTON — Mayoral candidates Arlene Burgos, who earned the Democratic nomination during a convention in February, and Robert Grados, a registered Democrat running as an independent, went head-to-head on Tuesday, Oct. 14, during a forum hosted by the League of Women Voters of the River-towns. The virtual event was the first opportunity voters had to hear the candidates speak side by side, albeit remotely, about their views before the Nov. 4 election. Burgos, the current deputy mayor who also works as an attorney specializing in estate planning, and Grados, a real estate attorney and former Irvington School Board president, sparred on a variety of topics, including how to implement improvements to municipal facilities and streamline the building permitting process.

Facilities Upgrades

Early on, the candidates spoke about the \$18.2 million bond proposal to revamp Irvington's firehouse and village hall that voters rejected in 2023, and other efforts to

Continued on page 4

Wing to reopen as bond projects progress

BY AMY BOCHNER

HASTINGS — Progress on the capital bond project approved by voters in July and the Farragut Wing renovation were at the forefront of the Hastings School Board's Oct. 7 meeting.

John Hansen from Triton Construction shared a presentation on the bond, which totals \$38,475,500. The board signed a contract with Triton to be the project's construction manager on Sept. 11. The other members of the team are Chris Pearson, Teddy

Tsiboukis, Kevin Sawyer, and Redi Gjecka.

Hansen outlined the four phases that the project will follow, starting with the design phase, which includes providing cost estimates, performing value engineering and constructability reviews, and assessing bid documents. Following this will be the bidding phase, in which Triton will develop bid packages, vet contractors, and recommend awards.

In the third phase, construction, Triton will oversee and manage all contractors and

site activities. The final phase is post-construction, where Triton will manage punch list completion and close-out; collect as-built documents; and oversee warranty work. Continuous responsibilities throughout each of the phases are budget and cash flow tracking, monthly progress and financial reporting, and community updates

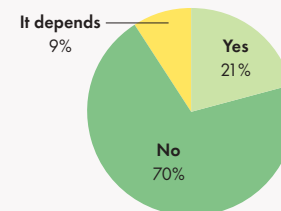
Hansen described the current state of the project, which is made up of the three propositions that voters approved.

Continued on page 13

— You Answered —

Would you support having a cannabis dispensary open in your village?

As answered by 340 readers of the Rivertowns Dispatch



Vote at rivertownsdispatch.com/the-weekly-poll

Irvington mayoral forum

Continued from page 1

achieve the same goal. Burgos and Grados agreed that developing a plan to upgrade municipal facilities is the most important issue the village faces.

Grados criticized the Village's recent approach, which has included the formation of the volunteer Facilities Planning Committee (FPC) in April 2024 and spending \$450,000 to hire Beyer Blinder Belle (BBB) Architects & Planners as a consultant earlier this month. Grados served on the Irvington Board of Education from 2010-16, including two years as president, and believes that his experience helping to pass the proposition to build the turf Meszaros Field and Oley Track in 2016 will help him lead the efforts to improve facilities.

"With the failure of the prior bond, and the years that have followed without materially moving the ball forward, costs have only become more expensive, yet we spend more money on consultants," Grados said during the forum. "The problem we have, I believe, is an issue of focus. When I led the fields bonds, I was able to bring focus to a plan that addressed the goal, but was also accessible to the community."

Burgos, who has been on the board since 2021 and maintains that she had issues with the failed bond proposal before it was voted down, believes that the current path the Village is on to identify facilities in need of improvement and potential sites for relocation is the best one.

"I disagree with Bob that consultants are

not necessary, because I do feel that after the bond vote, people felt that was wrong and that the way the Village was addressing these issues did not include them," Burgos explained, expressing confidence in BBB. "They're going to help us plan not for the short term, but five, 10, 15, 20 years down the line. We're going to do needs assessments, we're going to talk to all of the Village departments, and this is going to be a process that will lead to a successful conclusion and have community buy-in, which is paramount."

Building permit processes

Another hot-button topic in this election is how to simplify the approval process for building renovation and construction. The Land Use Approval Streamlining Committee was formed earlier this year to address the issue, and in March the Village spent \$20,000 to hire Pace Land Use Law Center as a consultant to assess the Village's current processes and develop an improvement plan.

"The Streamlining Committee is the starting place because I believe that we have to look at our overall code and we have to look at all of these different pieces and places where we protect the historic nature of Irvington," Burgos said. "The great thing is that the Streamlining Committee has gone through a rigorous process with the Pace Land Use Law Center."

The committee reported a total 13 recommendations during a village board work session on Wednesday, Oct. 15. Similar to his criticism of the Village's approach to upgrading its facilities, Grados believes the Village is relying too heavily on studies by consultants.

"We need to actually streamline that process by taking best practices from across the county, as opposed to what any consultant says, to make sure how we deal with building issues is best in class," Grados said. "I know how to do that because I've worked with those issues for the past 30 years [as a real estate attorney]."

History and experience

Grados, a registered Democrat, addressed criticism about his decision to run as an independent. Grados changed his registration from Republican to unaffiliated in 2019, and from unaffiliated to Democrat in 2024.

"I have never defined myself by political party affiliation, and I'm running as an independent because I believe that local politics should not be driven by any one political party agenda," Grados said. "I'm also pro-diversity, but to claim that and be that, one needs to listen to all voices and not just the voices that are being put forth by any political party."

"I agree that many local issues are non-partisan, however I do think that if you're a Democrat, especially in this political climate, you should respect the democratic process," Burgos said in response. "It's important to note that the Democratic Committee had a convention. We had hundreds of Democrats in Irvington vote in that convention, and my opponent did not participate."

Burgos also called out Grados for a lack of government experience.

"I think experience in real estate is nice, but Bob hasn't really been involved in any of these processes, and he could've been, but he hasn't been," Burgos said. "Bob is also a

second alternate on the ZBA [zoning board of appeals], and has not participated in this process. I think it's important that you show up, that you're there, that you're involved in village life. I think it's hard to step in and impose your view on the village."

In his rebuttal, Grados highlighted his years serving on the school board, explaining that during that time he helped negotiate labor contracts and pass school budgets. Grados also served as chair of the Irvington Fundraising and Community Event (FACE) Committee from 2019-23.

"I've never suggested that I would impose my will or desire on anything," Grados said. "I'm a collaborative leader. The issues that Irvington faces, I've already done these things, and I'll continue to lead the same way I led when I was on the school board."

Both Grados and Burgos agreed that creating more affordable housing for young families, teachers, firefighters, police officers, and other first responders is an effort for the Village to pursue. Burgos and Grados both also believe that unless required by a specific judicial warrant, the Irvington police should not be participating with federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers.

The general election is Tuesday, Nov. 4, with polls open for voting between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. Early voting is taking place between Oct. 25 and Nov. 2 and can be done at any of the 25 designated early voting sites throughout the county, including the Hastings Public Library, which is the closest site to Irvington. For the full list, visit citizen-participation.westchestergov.com.

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