

Public Statement Made by Trustee Scherer
at the Village of Tuxedo Park Board Meeting on June 26, 2024

At the last regularly scheduled Village Board meeting, I indicated that I had received letters from the Orange County Board of Elections challenging my voter registration as well as the voter registrations of my wife, Rowena, and my son, Justin. This was clearly a personal attack designed to intimidate me and presumably discourage me from continuing to serve as a public officer. At that meeting, I stated my intent to figure out who had challenged my registration and the reason for that challenge. I plan to use my time today to update the community on my findings and make a plea to both the perpetrator and the community to put an end to the divisive and economically costly behavior that has plagued our community over the last few years.

After speaking with the Orange County Election Commissioner, I submitted a request to the County under the Freedom of Information Law, also known as FOIL. The information that I received was both surprising and not surprising at the same time. The piece that was not surprising was that it was Claudio Guazzoni, the self-proclaimed Public Advocate, who had submitted the challenge to my registration. The piece that was surprising was he had hired a private investigator to investigate close to 60 people in our small community, many of whom are long-time and well-respected residents of the Village.

There were several troubling elements of this investigation, separate from the fact that Guazzoni hired a private investigator to delve into the private lives of his neighbors. First, the investigation was called "Project Eradicated," as if the goal was to eradicate an insect or sub-human infestation. Second, the investigator accessed sensitive private information by using, and I quote from the letter, "data base platforms that are used by law enforcement" which provide "real time identification and location of people, assets, and their interrelationships." Third, the investigation was clearly timed to interfere with our most recent Village election and targeted individuals Guazzoni viewed as being supporters of the former Mayor, David McFadden. If you would like to see the letter and report from the private investigator, please go the Editorials page TPFYI.com and click on the "Letters to the Editor" link for a submission by Sean Madden.

As Sean Madden correctly points out in his letter, many of the voters singled out by Guazzoni are residents that have more than one home, and his challenges to their registration are baseless: New York law is clear that voters with multiple residences may choose one of them for election purposes, and it does not need to be their "primary" residence. Guazzoni himself has multiple residences. I'm certain he understands the law and knew prior to his investigation that the vast of majority of his targets were valid voters.

Unfortunately, this latest project by Guazzoni is just one of many divisive, destructive and economically costly projects that he has embarked on in recent years. In all, I estimate that Guazzoni's actions have cost our community at least \$500,000 or almost \$2,000 per household. These actions have done nothing to improve the community, in fact, the opposite has been the case. This is money that our community sorely needs for investment in our aging infrastructure, among other things. For those of you that are new to the community or do not closely follow Village politics, I would like to highlight some of Guazzoni's more destructive actions and their costs.

The most recent attacks by Guazzoni required the County to expend significant resources, as his voter registration challenges required the County to investigate Guazzoni's claims by dispatching Deputies from the County Sheriff's Office to the Village to interview individuals targeted by

Public Statement Made by Trustee Scherer
at the Village of Tuxedo Park Board Meeting on June 26, 2024

Guazzoni. As you can imagine, for the individuals that had undercover agents showing up at their homes unannounced, this was an uncomfortable and alarming experience.

Going back to last year's mayoral election, many of you are aware of Guazzoni's frivolous lawsuit challenging the votes of individuals he viewed as supporters of David McFadden. In addition to unnecessarily delaying the ultimate result and dividing our community, Guazzoni cost Village taxpayers approximately \$275,000. All of us taxpayers paid for Guazzoni's spitefulness towards the former Mayor.

Finally, when Guazzoni was an elected Village Trustee, he flouted his obligations as a public official under New York's Freedom of Information Law, ultimately costing Village taxpayers over \$150,000 in legal fees and settlement costs. As a result, the Village Board of Trustees, at a public meeting on December 21, 2022, unanimously adopted a Resolution of Censure against Guazzoni, rebuking him for quote "not providing the level of cooperation and candor required of him as a Village official under New York law.... Consequently, Village taxpayers incurred significant costs in this matter."

Unfortunately, the list of destructive actions that I have just summarized is not exhaustive.

As the Mayor correctly highlighted in his most recent letter to the community, Guazzoni's behavior has only led to, and I quote, "outrage and further divides the community." As I have repeatedly stated, the current Mayor has taken significant steps to heal the wounds in our community, and I give him credit for facilitating the uncontested election that we just conducted. The two candidates, Michele Lindsay and Jedediah Turner, are two well-respected and uncontroversial individuals who required persuasion by the Mayor and others to volunteer their time. With the toxic environment Guazzoni has created, is anyone surprised by the hesitation of these individuals, and by other individuals being asked to volunteer for open positions on the BAR, BZA and Planning Board?

So here is my direct request to you, Claudio Guazzoni. Stop the investigations of your neighbors. Stop the frivolous attacks against unpaid elected officials. Stop the litigation and threats of litigation. None of this is normal behavior, and none of it is necessary. If you have legitimate concerns or areas where the Village can improve, bring them up like every other constituent – show up at our monthly meeting and let your voice be heard. Litigation and threats of litigation should be a last resort. For people that associate with Claudio or consider him a friend, please, do the community a favor and encourage him to find more productive ways to spend his time.

Thank you.