



CLARKSTOWN RESIDENTS WANT TO KNOW WHERE THE MONEY WENT

BY: Keith S. Shikowitz, Editor in Chief/Investigative Reporter

Last year allegations against Michael Gianatasio, director of engineering and facilities management for the town of Clarkstown surfaced. An investigation began 2025, after claims that he failed to disclose private connections to vendors and businesses the town utilized. Gianatasio was placed on administrative leave while an independent ethics committee conducted the investigation.

What got this started was Gianatasio claiming, as a whistleblower, that there are discrepancies in how the town has been spending approximately \$600,000 from a town contract with Siemens Energy.

The town believes that this is not a whistleblowing effort and is rather retaliation from Gianatasio.

Some of the Democratic candidates for Clarkstown Town council along with other Clarkstown residents held a protest outside of the Clarkstown Town Hall on July 14, 2026, before the board meeting.

Eugene Bondar, candidate whose goal is unseating Town Supervisor George Hoehmann took questions from the press.

"We're primarily here today for the rally because all the residents they're all seeking answers. The town has been approving on the 9 million dollars energy efficiency contract for work that has not been supported within the building. The town engineer has flagged this issue to the town officials and the town officials have not provided any answers to that. As far as I'm concerned, they have called for an independent audit that they should do under the circumstances, and we came here today to demand answers.

Basically, the demonstrators were going to go into the meeting and in the public comment time let town officials know where the board stands on this issue.

"Absolutely we're going in to ask questions to find out what the town has done since this has been brought to their attention beginning in May to the town controller and in June to the supervisor, the town engineer that is now on paid administrative leave. Today, just earlier, the town attorney has announced that the town engineer was put on paid administrative leave due to an investigation that the town has opened into him last year. One of the questions that comes to mind is if the town knew about the alleged wrongdoing by this engineer last year. Why hadn't they placed him on leave until last week when he brought the Siemens matter to their attention?

There's a lot of questions and accountability is very important in the government and transparency is necessary." Bondar asked.

How did Bondar react to the town attorney's statement on this issue. Is that something they really had no idea that this was going on for a year?

Bondar responded, "We had no idea that was going on for a year, we had no idea about the Siemens contract until earlier this month, I believe last week. Rockland Business Journal published a report on this disclosing the situation. The district attorney's office is also apparently asking questions because it was brought to their attention about the same contract. As far as I'm concerned, being an attorney, seeing that the town attorney is openly speaking about an ongoing investigation shocks my conscience. I think that they're answering questions that are not being asked."

According to Bondar, the real question is where's the money? What happened to this money that has been paid for? Why has a portion of an energy efficient contract improvement been spent on a contract to rehabilitate a playground by switching slides and swings there? That has nothing to do with energy efficiency. So that's what we're here to know.

Greg Sheehan, co-chair of the Clarkston Democratic Committee and candidate for town clerk for Clarkstown explained what brought him out there.

"Well, what brought me out here actually started years ago when the Article 9 energy efficiency audit started with Siemens. It was years ago that this process started, and I've been with it ever since. That was before I was even involved in politics, but because of the lack of foresight and information given and the transparency that we all should have in our town leadership, I've been pushing further and further to try to get more answers, which is why I was running for office."

He explained that the biggest problem is that this massive project, which was originally approved for over \$12 million recommended that it be \$17 million by Siemens, the professionals that we had come to do this audit, have only been authorized and spent about \$9 million. During that process, it appears that money is not being properly allocated or tracked, and that's a huge expenditure. "It's got to be one of the biggest programs that we've had here in this county that we are paying for. This isn't federal money. It isn't state money.

Now there is financing support, but we still have to pay it back. We're still bonding it. For to not to be utilized properly is a major concern So those are the questions that we're going to ask tonight."

One of the things Sheehan is going to ask is what was the bidding process? This was something that he asked years ago. "We brought in through a free audit. How are we going to bid this out? It's going to be broken up to local companies that can do it in pieces. But no, Siemens got everything. A massive corporation that came in and now we have problems. Now we have \$500,000 missing that we would like answers for, and that can't be done."

How did he react to what the town attorney posted today?

"The town attorney posting that information was surprising that they would have issues with a high-level appointed person in our town, a hired employee that wouldn't be put on administrative leave when they first heard of the issue. If there's also corroborating evidence from previous work that he had done that. Have there been issues like this in the past. Why not put an administrative leave then do the investigation in the open for all of us to see. The concern now is what is actually going on? We want answers."

According to Sheehan, unfortunately from this leadership they haven't been getting them for years. He believes they just posted this because of all the attention it's been getting recently because of the position he's in, the experience that he's had.

"As I said, everything that I've seen over these last few years, that's what they do. That's what we've seen."

What are you expecting or hoping to get out of going into tonight's meeting and talking to town officials?

"I'm expecting to be frustrated, as many here probably are. I'm hoping that we get some answers. I'm hoping that even if some of the other councilmen that haven't been parked, if something had gone wrong, can speak up and give us more information. With an investigation going on, some of those hands should be tied during an investigation, but the question is what can they tell us? What's going on with the money should absolutely be.

That has nothing to do with the ethics violations or anything like that. That is something they should be able to tell us today, but I don't think we're going to find those answers. No one's been talking about it. It's been a week. They haven't given us any information."

Joe Damiani who is running for town councilman, Clarkstown, 4th Ward attended the protest. What was his reaction the information that had been coming out?

“From what I'm hearing, lack of transparency from the board is number one. We're finding out about things piecemeal and, it has to come out from people that are pointing fingers at the town. What concerns me is that we're spending taxpayers' money, but we don't know how it's being spent, if it's being accounted for properly, and I came out of retirement from the military, and from the airlines to run because, to be honest with you, people in my age group who are just retiring, who grew up here, who watched the equities of their homes go down, they're being taxed out of here. The assessments on the properties go up every year and their taxes go up every year. They say that they're holding the line on taxes, but they're not, and people are leaving and young people can't afford to live here because the taxes are too high. Now If you're not spending the money appropriately that you're taking in, you need to explain why not.”

He says that if you can't be accountable for hundreds of thousands of dollars on one contract, we need to know why. He wants them to give the facts to the Clarkstown residents.

Is he expecting to get facts from the board tonight at the meeting? From what he's seen on social media so far from the town, they've heard a lot of doublespeak. They've heard a lot of deflection away from the actual situation. He won't use the cover-up word and he's not going to point fingers, but he wants the council to tell them about the contract and show them the contract.

“I want them to explain the discrepancy in funding of labor. That's what we need to hear. We don't need to hear about this guy's not a Boy Scout or that guy's not a Boy Scout or what this guy did 20 years ago. We don't need to hear that. That's a deflection. It's obfuscation. I want to hear the facts about what you did with the taxpayers' money period.”

The protest took place after the individuals spoke with the press. A number of people spoke out against the current Clarkstown government's handling of this situation.

https://youtu.be/hYso9uQ_EOY

At the town board meeting, after the pledge of allegiance, a tribute to Brian Tessman for over 40 years of service to the Parks and Recreation board, and a brief five-minute recess for all those who were there to honor Tessman to leave, the meeting took place.

Hoehmann gave the floor to the Town Attorney Kevin Conway

https://youtu.be/RofS2vBxl_U

A number of people commented and asked questions on the topic wanting answers to a variety of question related to this situation.

When Conway had finished, Supervisor Hoehmann took the mike. “So, Mr. Attorney, with your indulgence since we're done with public comment. I'll let you offer any additional comment. I hope that the ethics board will be, will do this expeditiously, and I believe that they will. There is a civil service process even though Mr. Gianatasio is not a member of the CSEA he is civil service protected and there is a process that will play out with that, and we would expect it to be done expeditiously. We have a lot of confidence in the ethics board which are independent. They happen to be comprised of clergy people from across the town and they function independently. They have their own independent authority including their own ability to try to compel people to come on in.”

He added, “Their ethics counsel is somebody that I've met a couple of times in my entire tenure as town supervisor, and she's regarded as one of the leading ethics attorneys in the country and has worked for some major cities from I think out west all the way through New York State, Suzanne Dugan, so I would have enormous confidence in the ethics board for Ms. Dugan to complete their process expeditiously. I think that's about what we can say on that.”

Hoehmann then answered to some public comments made by the current highway superintendent Mr. Bob Milone.

https://youtu.be/pUQmIKR_Cq8

After this segment was dealt with, the board got down to the business at hand on the agenda. There were 25 items. All were approved by the board.

The situation with Michael Gianatasio is an ongoing investigation and as such, no government official will be able to comment on it. Conway and Hoehmann urged the public to stay calm, patient and let the process play out whichever way the information goes.