



Don Francino – Looking to Keep Representing Ward 3 PART 1

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

Who is Don Francino? Why is he running for reelection? What has he done for the ward and town? What will he do for the ward and town if reelected? These questions are going to be answered in the following story.

“Going way back into the 50s, I had to take over my father's business because he had open heart surgery. Back then it was being pioneered, so he couldn't do the business anymore. My oldest brother, who was in Fordham University, could not leave Fordham University or he was going to be drafted into the Vietnam War.

At 14 I took over the business and I ran it.”

What kind of business was that?

“Rubbish removal. I did this area, up here. I did it until we were able to sell it. The person that bought it bought the houses. I did the commercial end, and then they wanted me to do this area, Garnerville, Stony Point, West Haverstraw, all of it, and I did it while I was working my way through Dominican and now it's university. At 14 I had to get out of sports and do my father's business for the family to survive and stay in the house. The police looked the other way back then when I was driving the trucks. Obviously I wasn't even licensed to drive a car, but I did drive the trucks and did the business and then I went on and graduated from Dominican College.”

“Since I had no experience, the head hunter got me in the insurance business. I latched on to Allstate and I stayed with them ever since. That is like a secret working for an insurance company and how it works and increases your salary each and every year. You're hired a straight commission, no salary, so you got to work and I worked it up, built it up, and came all the way up to here where I ran for election.”

<https://youtu.be/n6wsPjLiHnw>

Outside of his responsibilities as Ward 3 Councilman, he has his son-in-law's farm in Massachusetts which he helps out at that they've turned into a family destination. This coming weekend (October 23 – 25) will be the busiest weekend of the year. They will probably handle upwards of 4000 people showing up to the farm, because they have the trick or treat hay rides. Last weekend, (October 9 – 11) he had to make up containers for apple cider donuts which is their number one seller on the farm, no longer vegetables, but apple cider. The farm is doing extremely well, and that's my son-in-law's, but he's like Francino's father, he's a one-man operation.

Francino says he's running to be able to keep going with what he's doing to help out the community more.

“When, Pyramid was in charge of the Palisade Center they were proposing to build residential housing out toward 59, which I supported for younger families, younger individuals where they would have the ability to work in the city, take a bus on designated bus lane over to Tarrytown, jump on a train and go to the city. That was a win-win situation, and of course Pyramid, given everything with COVID, got into financial difficulty. There are now new owners. I was there yesterday. They've added a lot of stores into that mall that weren't there before. Two anchors are coming. They couldn't tell me who they are, but I just said, I hope you keep it alive that you want to build residential housing, and they said for sure that they do.”

“I said, well, you have an ally in me that I support housing at the Palisade Center, and if I'm still in office, I will proceed with it. The other one was you have BJ's down there. BJ's wanted to build a gas station, much like what Costco has, but they were going to do it in the ratty area on 59 east of Dunkin' Donuts where you've got the beverage place. It's a dump and then next to them is the old gas station that would all come out and BJ's would build their gas station. We're waiting for all these businesses to step forward and step up and do what they want to do. I have no opposition to that at all. I would promote it.”

Since you mentioned housing with the mall, tell me about it. You have a temporary moratorium housing in Clarkstown. Do you see a major need for more housing? Do you see maybe you got too much housing in Clarkstown?

<https://youtu.be/hYzRxx0CzsY>

Another issue that people are on about is affordability. It's a major thing on the national level, state level, and even, especially local level, What is in your plans to work with the rest of the council to make Clarkstown more affordable?

“I'm shocked that houses are going for a million dollars. I just can't believe it, that it's that high. There's going to be a comedown at some point in time. There's gotta be. There's got to be a reckoning. Gas prices, I think, will take care of itself once whatever's going on in Iran is settled. Well, it's not just Iran, it's, Ukraine and, and Russia. We've had them taking, taking out oil tanks and stuff all over the place.”

It's ridiculous that that many people have died in these wars for what? I don't get it. The United States will never put boots on the

ground and survive because the backlash that'll come from not only the voters, but everyday citizens will be intense.

What are you able to do or what have you got planned to do to help bring down the housing prices, bring down the cost of other things to make Clarkstown affordable.

“That's a difficult question because there are a lot of factors we don't control. The market's going to bear the price. Somebody's going to ask a million dollars for their house and there's a bidding war.

Something's not right that that occurs and it does occur. It's happened in my neighborhood. I mean, my neighborhood is not a million-dollar neighborhood and it shouldn't have happened, but it did. People want to live here. They like the convenience. They like the safety, and they're willing to pay for it and that you can't change.”

According to Francino, when you say affordability housing prices are not going to come down because this is a desirable community, schools, safety. This is what people want for their families. When he was knocking on doors endlessly, which he hates to do, he knocked on one door. A woman answered the door and she was an immigrant. She was legal. Surprisingly how they invite me into their homes, but she said her and her husband each worked two jobs because they're working for their children, they love the school district. They love the safety that's here.

“Those are the two topics when it comes to families, schools and safety, and they're willing to pay for it for their children. That is not going to drive housing prices down. That's attracting more and more as good as our schools are, as good as our police protection is, unless that goes down the tubes, you're going to attract people to this area. It's just going to keep prices where they are, if not go up. That's why I want apartments. I want 2-bedroom, 1 bedroom for the single kids that are still living at home, two bedroom for a young family, just starting a family, and for someone like me who wants to downsize, I want to get out of the house I'm in.”

“My wife doesn't want to go. I said that we don't need this big house, but she won't move. She won't put the house up for sale. She's comfortable.

You get into a routine, regardless of, But I want to make the house available to younger people that have young children and to grow up through that house. It's time for us to be not in senior housing, but certainly if the mall puts apartments in, I'm going there, so as long as it's pet friendly."

Adding to the quality of life in a community is having good infrastructure. Which is another major thing that people look at. What's going on with the infrastructure in Clarkstown, roads, water pipes?

"I have to say Veolia and O & R keep up on their infrastructure. They do. They're replacing telephone poles, putting utilities underground. Veolia has been changing pipes, upgrading them. The big issue I have in my ward is Nyack Water, which services the Palisade Center and they have to do major upgrades and the people, you know, I met with Veolia, who was willing to take over Nyack Water and do the improvements that are needed, but people are loyal to Nyack Water. A week doesn't go by that a pipe doesn't collapse. If you go, as far as infrastructure, as far as roads go. The unfortunate thing is we got three hands in the pot. The New York State Department of Transportation, the Thruway Authority, the county, I should say 4, and the town."

He pointed out the complexity of the road situation. "That's a town road, they're responsible. That's a county road, they're responsible. That's a state road, they're responsible. Then you have the federal roads like the Thruway."

He proposed to the New York State Thruway Authority to close the Mountain View entrance to the thruway and to go further East on 59 and go up right before the bridge two lanes onto the thruway. That's where the jam up occurs. People trying to make the left to get on Mountain View to get on the thruway, that would be eliminated. The entrance to the thruway would only be for people exiting Nyack coming west on 59. Take the turn and get on. It would be blocked off from Mountain View. Build the two lanes as a ramp right up onto the thruway and save the local and make it just stay the local Dickinson that people can't sneak up around the back and try to get on a shortcut. Two lanes dedicated from 59 right on to the thruway right before the bridge. He's proposed it since I've been in this seat, but you're dealing with bureaucrats who are not elected. the Thruway authority, the state DOT, I've been pushing for sound barriers on the New York State Thruway, the way I see it in other states, Virginia for example. The throughway authority said we're not going to do sound barriers unless there's a major project that they have to do on the thruway. Well, that's coming. The 4th lane on the thruway is coming, and believe me, whether I'm an elected office or not, I have their letters where they said to me sound barriers only come when there's a major construction project, and I'm going to, and I hope I'm still alive when it does happen, but I want the sound barriers through West Nyack all the way up to the Garden State Parkway on both sides so nobody hears them and it becomes a tunnel, but I'm going to hold them to their word because I have their letters. I did not destroy them."

Are there any major infrastructure projects on the table for the town?

"We're just doing road improvements is what we're doing. The one project that we're actively in now is syncing the traffic lights. To give you an idea, if you're down in Nanuet at rush hour and you're looking to make a right on North Middletown Road, that thing backs up to 59 because the lights aren't synced. We're putting in the smart lights. The one place where there's smart lights is further East on 59 where the Mobil station is that counts the cars that are waiting to turn, and the lights trip quicker for where there's a backup of vehicles. That's going to happen with the lights on 59 and North Middletown."

He added that on North Middletown, all the lights will be green all at once, so any traffic coming, once you get past Smith Road where Costco is it lessens up anyway so it's just those lights when they trip and turn red, boom, the traffic backs up so they will be smart lights we're doing that as a townwide project which is good to keep traffic moving.

"Then you got the 303 and 304 renovations. Yeah, they're doing that at night. Yeah, I got caught in that coming out of a town board meeting. I forgot that they were doing it. I think those lights on 304 need to be changed ever since the boy died at the intersection of where Starbucks is now. If you are coming North on 304 and you want to make a left onto West Nyack Road, you have a green arrow. Fine. The green arrow goes yellow and disappears.

"This woman, she was there going to make the left. There was a van on the other side which you can't see around. She made the left and there was a pickup truck booking it down 304, split her van in half, killed her child instantly."

"When they were doing the renovation there and Starbucks was going in, I said to New York State, I want the light changed. I want the red arrow put on that traffic light. They said, wait for the renovation to come through, and they're coming. They're in New City now and hopefully they'll install that light."

<https://youtu.be/UH36RE-mrP8>

The economy we just said you have 60% of the rateables in the county. What are you doing to bring in more business and maintain the businesses that are here?

"What's happening, we hired Jeff Gillies. He handles facilitating any people that are going into business with our land use boards and facilitate their ability, but the problem is we're getting to the point we don't have any place to put them. We have 0 vacancy. They tore down the Kia dealership in Nanuet now it's another car wash.

"We have no empty stores. The people ask me about storage facilities; those storage facilities are for the businesses to store their inventory. If they change from Christmas to Easter or whatever, so during the summer they've got to store their goods some somewhere and, that's the storage facilities which support the businesses, but for us the strip malls, the minute there's a vacancy, it's zapped up like that."

According to Francino, they don't have to do anything as a town. Businesses are taking care of it themselves. They have now where the Democrats have their headquarters, in Nanuet on 59 and Smith. That's where they are. It used to be a used car dealer before that it was a makeup place. Well, it's been bought over and I know the person has bought it, and he says, Don, I'm going to tear it down and I'm going to put a strip mall in and a tire place in a strip mall.

"I said to him, Ken, we have Mavis tire, 2 of them in Nanuet. What do we need with a third tire place? He said there's a lot of cars in the county and they all need tires, so there's a market here for it. I said if you can make a run of it, that's fine with me. Leave the town out of it."

I want to increase tax revenue for the town, and that we did with, Chick Fil A coming in and so on and so forth. There's nowhere else for businesses to locate.