

WHO IS ARTHUR SCHWARTZ?

SOMEONE WHO BELIEVES THAT THE ONLY WAY TO CHANGE THINGS IS TO MAKE PEOPLE RESPECT YOU.



To the Members of the Village Independent Democrats:

First, a personal note (even though all of this is personal).

I have been a political activist since 1968. I did not join VID until around 1990, so I could support Tony Hoffman, a fellow playground dad, who was then the District Leader, in his race for Assembly vs. Deborah Glick. (Yes, Tony ran vs. Deborah!) Tony and I had worked together to build a playground parents group at Bleecker Playground, called Bring Back Our Park (BBOP), which eventually helped clean up the park and get the money to have it renovated. In 1994 our Council member, Tom Duane, called me and asked if I wanted to run for District Leader. I took 6 months to say yes. I came to a VID meeting, in November 1994, after Pataki had beaten Cuomo, and Newt Gingrich had pulled off taking the House in year two of Clinton, and there were 3 other people at the meeting. I basically built a campaign over the next 10 months largely separate from VID, involving hundreds of people, and I won, 60-40, over the then-hated Village Reform Democrats, and helped a VID backed Female District Leader candidate win too (that candidate, Aubrey Lees, beat the incumbent). I worked really hard after that to rebuild VID.

The next Spring, we filled up 80 Fifth Avenue with over 250 people at the annual dinner. VID was back.

But I had a rocky relationship. VID supported an incumbent for Surrogate, and I supported Karen Burstein, who had lost in 1994 for AG because she was a lesbian (and who had supported me and Aubrey). The next year I supported Chuck Schumer vs Al D'Amato, and although VID went captain's choice, the core leadership supported Mark Green. Then in 1998 Tom Duane moved up to the Senate and I supported Christine Quinn (who had run my campaign in 1995) and VID endorsed Aubrey Lees. It was downhill from there. Quinn and Duane and I created a new "club," ran someone against Keen Berger in 2013 for District Leader, and I became an enemy of VID. My membership checks actually were returned to me.

After that, although I was nominally a member of VRDC, I was on my own. I worked for Obama in 2008. VID supported Hillary. I did bring Zephyr (as her Treasurer) to a VID meeting in 2014 and she was endorsed, but then I went on to work for Bernie in 2016 (as counsel) when VID endorsed Hillary, and Jumaane for Lt. Governor in 2018, when VID supported Kathy Hochul.

When David Siffert was elected President of VID, as part of a new generation, I came back, and I have tried to make most meetings and report and share my work in the community. I actually didn't get endorsed by VID when I ran for DL re-election in 2019, which was painful, especially since I didn't have an opponent, and I know this year that in this race I am running against a favorite son, who I consider to be a good friend. But I am here, because with the story you will read below, I believe that I am the best candidate for these times in NYC>

On December 10 I will only have 3 minutes to define who I am before facing questions. That will be challenging since I have been an activist fighting for change for over 50 years, all 50 of which define who I am in these exhilarating and challenging times. If there is any way that I can define that approach, since I participated in my first sit-in at the Bronx High School of Science in 1968 up to the lawsuit I will be filing on around Thanksgiving to stop token booth closings, it's that I know that "going along to get along" doesn't win transformative change, transformative change which still calls out to us.

I grew up in the Bronx, child of two first generation Americans, inspired by a mother (now 98 years old) who was an activist leader, at times alongside Bobby Kennedy, in the fight to change the approach the government took to address the needs of "retarded" persons. (I had an older brother who was institutionalized at age 8.)

I first became an activist at the Bronx HS of Science, and then at Columbia University, organizing against the Vietnam War, rebuilding a nationwide organized student movement, and reading a lot of Marx, Lenin, and Mao. After college, I attended Hofstra University Law School where I first started working with labor union reformers. One month after the NY Bar Exam I was in court representing hundreds of Postal Workers who had been fired for striking. For the past 4 decades no one has litigated more union democracy cases than me. City Limits once dubbed me "the equalizer," and many of my clients went on to win union office, and many of their opponents wound up in prison. I went on to serve as counsel to many unions including the Utility Workers Union at Con Edison, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union, Professional Staff Congress at CUNY, and for the last 20 years, NYC's bus and subway worker's union, Transport Workers Union Local 100.

Not only did I litigate union democracy issues; I represented thousands of workers standing against discrimination, sexual harassment, wage theft, and unfair termination. I saw the power of organized workers in action-- in particular, I experienced, representing TWU during the 2005 Transit Strike, the impact that 35,000 workers could have on a city of millions, and how to negotiate a win out of what seemed to be an intractable dispute.

I did not work only as a labor/employment lawyer; I offered myself as counsel to social movements, counseling anti-nuclear groups, anti-Central America intervention groups, ACORN, NY Communities for Change, Make the Road NY, Occupy Wall Street, anti-gas pipeline activists, Black Lives Matter, and many others. In 2010 I founded Advocates for Justice, a non-profit legal foundation, whose work has included working with parents who sued Success Academy a dozen times for mistreating students, and encroaching on space needed for special education students; winning election and polling place reform

(I was on a team which got the 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary restored); representing elderly tenants in eviction and landlord disputes, representing community groups fighting inappropriate development, CUNY students fighting for open Board meetings, and on and on. Until July (when I had to step aside because of FCC Rules), I hosted a weekly radio show on Mondays at 5 PM on WBAI; my guests included Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Samelys Lopez, Jamaal Bowman, Mondaire Jones, Tom DiNapoli, Nina Turner, Alessandra Biaggi, and Jumaane Williams, and leaders of environmental, tenants' rights, criminal justice reform groups and groups fighting systemic racism, like Black Lives Matter and Vocal NY. And, when WBAI was faced with closure in 2019, I successfully litigated in court to keep the nonprofit, listener-supported station on the air, and then became General Counsel to the entire nationwide network (the Pacifica Foundation) it was part of.

Politically, I have helped progressive activists grow and develop our movement. I coordinated Barack Obama's campaign in Manhattan in 2007-8 (working closely with Paul Newell) and was elected as a delegate to the Democratic Convention. In 2014 I was Treasurer for Zephyr Teachout's Davida vs. Goliath run for Governor. In 2016 I served as state-wide counsel to Bernie Sanders' first Presidential campaign and was again a delegate to the DNC. I was chosen by Bernie Sanders again in 2020. Out of the Sander's 2016 campaign I helped create and build the NY Progressive Action Network, a state-wide group which I serve as Political Director, Treasurer and Counsel. I have served as election counsel to Cynthia Nixon, Jumaane Williams, Mondaire Jones, and, in 2020, a whole slate of AOC-allied candidates which won 20 District Leader and State Committee seats, and some Assembly seats in Queens (including the first transgender District Leader ever, Emilia Decaudin, and 24 year old Assembly member elect Khaleel Anderson), and I count on them as friends.

In the Downtown community, I have been a leader for three decades. I was elected District Leader for the 66th AD Part A in 1995, and served until 2005, when I stepped aside for Brad Hoylman. I was elected to the State Committee in 2006 and served until 2013, when I was re-elected as District Leader in a three-way race. Additionally I served as Member of Community Board 2 from 1991 through 2015; while there I served over 17 years as either the Parks Committee Chair or the Waterfront Committee Chair, a period when Hudson River Park was built, the Rt 9a bikeway was created (I was the only yes vote on CB2) and Washington Square Park rebuilt. I also served as Chair or Vice Chair of the Hudson River Park Trust Advisory Council for a dozen years. And, despite my very dissident status in the Manhattan Democratic Party, I serve as Co-Law Chair, where I play a key role in judicial selection.

There is more! In 1992 I was the founder of the West Village Community Alliance for Parks and Playgrounds, where I secured over \$2.5 million for local park and playground renovation; in 1998 I was a co-founder of Friends of Hudson River Park, following deep involvement in drafting the legislation which created the park and prevented development in the Park, and the successful settlement of a suit against Governor Pataki to block the rental of Pier 40 to a private parking lot operator, as the result of which the State built ballfields on the Pier.

In my "spare time" I have litigated key suits, pro bono, for our community, suing to stop the closure of Beth Israel Hospital, stopping the development of a Costco on 14th Street and 6th Avenue, stopping the closure of token booths all over the City, winning elevators for local subway stops on 14th Street, challenging, under the NYC Human Rights Law, the elimination of bus stops in the 14th Street Busway, suing to force proper environmental review of that Busway, stopping the destruction of the stacks at the 42nd Street library, and litigating to save the newsstand at Astor Place (Jerry's Newsstand).

A NY Times' profile of me, published in February 1999, starts with this description: "Arthur Z. Schwartz loves to count the ways he has made people miserable." They were not referring to my neighbors.

I have lived in Greenwich Village for 40 years, and have raised four children there, two of whom are still teenagers. I have been involved in successful local businesses (a bakery and a restaurant). I am married, for almost 20 years, to a former leader of the Screen Actors' Guild, Kelly Craig.

With our City at its lowest point since the 1970s, we need leaders rooted in their communities that have proven track records of fighting for justice and winning. I am running for City Council because I am one of those leaders. I will hit the ground running and have what it takes to get to work for Soho, Greenwich Village, Chelsea, and Hell's Kitchen.

I have an extensive, well-thought out platform, driven by a strong ethic addressed to racism and the need to eliminate economic inequality, addressed to affordable housing, free mass transit, NYPD reform, and educational funding, and a strengthening of the role of community boards in decision making. Please go to www.ArthurforNYC.com to read it.

Enough! I hope that if you got through this, you will see me as a rather unique candidate, and give me the support of your rather unique political club.

In Solidarity,

Arthur Schwarty





VID Candidate Survey: City Council

Email address *

arthur@arthurfornyc.com

Name: *

Arthur Schwartz

In which Council District are you running? *

City Council District 3 ▼

City Council District 1

Do you support SoHo/NoHo rezoning? Is there a version of it you would support? *

Do you support the borough-based jail in Chinatown? *

Do you support replacing the Elizabeth Street Gardens with the proposed senior citizen development? *

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Do you support the Two Bridges developments? What changes would you make to them? *

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City Council District 2

Do you support the phased closing of East River Park for the current coastal resiliency project? If not, how would you ensure LES and EV residents are safe from future storms and flooding? *

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Do you support the move and downsizing of Beth Israel by Mount Sinai? Have you considered the effect on your constituents and do you have a different proposal? *

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City Council District 3

Would you support upzoning parts of the Village to create affordable housing? What is your plan to protect existing affordable housing and create more, in the Village specifically? *

I oppose upzoning as a way to create affordable housing. Upzoning in its current usage includes the concept of Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH), which allows developers to build more full market rentals (or condos) in return for a percentage of the apartments in the building being "affordable," a concept open to lots of manipulation, since "affordable" is defined as a percentage of the of "Area Median Income," which in neighborhoods like ours is quite high. MIH also allows public financing, a cherry on the top of private developers making lots of money in return for building "affordable" apartments.

I believe that affordable housing should be built entirely with public money, utilizing the City's Capital Budget. It is critical that zoning changes to properties zoned for Manufacturing or office/commercial to allow them to become apartments must be strictly opposed. One of the great tragedies of the last few years in the Village was the purchase of Pier 40's air rights for what was called the St John's Building, which was agreed to as part of a deal which was supposed to see 500 affordable apartments built, one-third of which was supposed to go to seniors. Once the air rights were transferred, with City Council approval for upzoning, the owners opted to use a "get out of jail" clause in the approval which allowed the owners to build commercial office "as of right." So Pier 40's air rights will now be Google HQ, and only 150 "affordable" apartments will be built.

Land is hard to come by in the 66AD part of District 3, which runs west of 5th Avenue until Washington Square Park, and west of McDougal further south, until Canal Street. Much of the area is landmarked, something I strongly support. As part of creating affordable housing (and I want a City-wide measure of median income and not an "area" one, the City will have to look to purchase existing commercial structures (as was done this past year by private developers on both sides of 14th Street at 6th Avenue, and at 11th Street and Broadway): there may be deals available due to the decrease in office space being used post-Covid. There is more space available north of 14th Street, and as Council Member I would focus on that area, which has far more potential space.

Many residents of District 3, particularly our elderly and people with disabilities, have complained that lax bike rule enforcement, increased outdoor dining, and other factors have made the Village less walkable and more dangerous for elderly and disabled pedestrians. What would you do to improve the situation? *

Outdoor dining - once the pandemic passes (and it will) the "permanency" of outdoor dining must end, and return to some (great) measure of the rules which existed before . These rules would respect zoning, respect noise regulation, respect the fire code, and would require ample space for people with disabilities to pass.

I will be filing suit in the near future for a number of block associations.

Although I have a Citibike key, and use a bike for some trips, I think it is key to look at the DOTs 2019 Mobility Survey, 41% of all trips were made by walking, 16% by subway, 8% by bus, and 2% by bicycle. For work trips 51% were made by subway, 10% by bus, and 2% by bicycle. To me this means that too much emphasis is put on enhancing bicycling, and not enough for pedestrians, and not enough money for mass transit. Electric bikes (not power assist bikes) should be licensed and have plates, and be required to travel with cars. Bike lanes for non-electric bikes need to be better policed, perhaps using traffic enforcement officers and school crossing guards, and should include speed bumps before each intersection, or a gravelly surface which slows riders down. Riding on sidewalks must be strictly prohibited and that prohibition enforced, again using traffic enforcement agents.

There have been several clashes between NYPD and protesters in past months. How would you work with the NYPD to ensure that peaceful protesters are not subject to kettling and other police practices that are harmful to the protesters? *

As a City Council member I would have regular meetings with law enforcement about demonstration tactics. I would insist on personal notice of any police action being taken against protestors. And I would fight to increase the power of the CCRB to impose penalties for inappropriate use of force, and for witnessing and not reporting inappropriate use of force. I know as a union lawyer that it IS possible to suspend a police officer, pre-hearing , for a fireable offense. I would make sure that that occurs.

How would you use this position to improve policing in New York? Do you support cutting NYPD funding in order to reallocate funds towards needed services and social programs? Where would you reallocate the funds, if so? What concrete policies would you advocate for to improve policing in NY? *

Although I think that the police, in general, and NYPD, in particular, acts as a tool of systemic racism, I do not dismiss the need to address public safety. Shootings are up and too many young people are losing their lives in neighborhoods like Brownsville and the South Bronx. The problem is that we make poverty a crime or criminalize people when what they need is a mental health professional, a social worker, a trained intermediary, drug treatment, real housing, food, or a job. The majority of calls the NYPD receives are for problems, not for crimes—problems that can be solved by people who don't have a gun or a badge. We have an opportunity to reengineer how we respond to the crisis and non-crisis needs of our residents. And in reengineering our approach to the crisis police no address (something I call Reimagining the Police), we can free up billions of dollars for the very programs which will help reduce crime - housing, school, food assistance, health care, and drug treatment.

As a City Council Member I will be outspoken in demanding law enforcement accountability and culture change. I will support proposal demilitarize the NYPD while still clearly responding to and investigating serious crime. I will also work to forge real partnership and community power through both precinct-level community participation in policy and priority-setting.

How would you go about creating more affordable housing in New York? What about permanent housing for New York's homeless population? Where would you put it? How would you make sure it's actually affordable and sustainable? Would you ever support upzoning in order to create it? Will you accept money from real estate interests? Please be specific on your proposals. *

I answered this earlier. I oppose upzoning in order to create housing. I oppose Mandatory Inclusionary Housing as a way to create affordable housing. I oppose use of Median Area Income as the measure in which affordable housing is awarded, because that approach keeps our neighborhood lily-white. The answer to me is for the City to engage in a massive Capital Project to build housing. If the State can spend billions to rebuild the Tappan Zee Bridge, LaGuardia and Kennedy Airports, those same sources of funds - bonds - which are especially appealing during this period of low interest rates, can be floated. This would also address housing for people who are homeless. Publicly run housing can be kept affordable, and it has to be linked to publically financed spaces for grocery stores which poorer people can afford, and additional spaces so that students' needs can be addressed.

I will not accept real estate developer money, or money connected to the real estate construction industry.

Do you support taxing the wealthy? What specific tax policy changes would you support in New York State and New York City to increase State and City revenue? How will you, at the same time, restore NYC's economic health, employment, tax base, and small businesses, both short-term and long? *

I would help lead the fight for NYC home rule on taxes. I support (like Elizabeth Warren) a tax on real corporate profits. I support an enhanced capital gains tax, state and City, especially on stock transfers. I support (again like Warren) a local version of her ultra-millionaire's tax, with a percentage of wealth being taxed annually. And like Bernie I support (for companies with over \$100 million in revenue) that companies with large gaps between their CEO and median worker pay would see progressively higher corporate tax rates. I do not believe that taxes will drive jobs out of NYC, so long as the funds are used to promote mass transit, and create housing. I also believe that we need commercial rent control, and a program which lets small landlords take a real estate tax credit for unpaid rent, so long as they pass that savings along to their commercial tenants.

How should we desegregate our schools? Do you support eliminating the SHSAT? Do you support admissions screens? What concrete changes would you make to our public school system? *

Genuine affordable housing, without AMI, is the key to integrated neighborhoods and in its wake, integrated schools. I am for creating or re-creating school districts which have a mix of ethnic/racial groups, so that by middle school there is an opportunity for kids to be in a more integrated learning space. I am a Bronx Science grad, and while I believe that the SHSAT can still be used, the admissions criteria needs to be expanded, just like competitive colleges are doing. I also want to see a return to community school boards with far greater power than the present CECs.

What is the path forward on corrections reform? Do you support closing Rikers? Do you support constructing new, borough-based jails? In all boroughs or just some of them? Do you support bail reform? Did you support the recent partial roll back of bail reform? *

To many crimes wind up with people in jail; from personal experience I know that 95% of those in jail are people of color, and 50% are parole violators, often because of a minor offense. We have to end a system where punishment is paramount, and where not just people who are dangerous are jailed. Rikers is an abomination, and I support borough based detention facilities, but the number of people in those facilities must be significantly reduced. I believe that the partial roll-back of bail reform was just plain wrong, and came about only because of the pandemic. I would support restoration of the original program.

How can New York lead on climate change? Are there any green energy projects we can pursue? Do you support any of the existing pipeline proposals? How can we leverage our financial and economic power to encourage other jurisdictions to be better on the climate? *

I believe that PACE funding needs to be increased exponentially, so that buildings can be retrofitted. I believe that we should be pursuing the use of geothermal energy throughout NYC. I oppose all pipeline proposals and have litigated to stop some. As for leveraging, NYC's multi-billion dollar pension funds can be used not just to support green companies, but to support investment programs which support clean energy.

How will you improve procurement and contracting? How do we cut waste, and how do we make sure women- and minority-owned businesses get a fair shake in the procurement process? *

Although this is largely a job for the Comptroller, the City Council must do its own audits of City agencies and their contracts, and create guideposts in the budget. MWBE do not get the opportunities they require, and far more stringent goals need to be set in the budget, and the Mayor and his agencies need to be called out when they fail to reach those goals.

What is your plan to save small businesses? How do we make sure, when we come back from COVID, our local businesses are still here? And how do we make sure the enormous amount of commercial vacancies get filled, and not just by big chains snatching up cheap leases? *

a) We need commercial rent control. b) As stated above, we need to give landlords r.e. tax credits in return for forgiving and reducing rents. Without knowing whether there will be another PPP, or the size of that PPP, and whether the City will get a Federal bailout, it is hard to discuss this further.

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

I have energy. I have a history of taking on entrenched interests and getting this done. I am not building a career by running for this office, this office will be the culmination of a career. I see being a City Council person as an exciting (!!) opportunity to help shape this City for its people, and for my own kids, so that it is a far, far better place to live. See www.arthurfornyc.com.

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