

# Candidates address community concerns

By ROKSANA AMID

ramid@liherald.com

October 5, 2023 - GLEN COVE HERALD

Residents from all over Glen Cove gathered at Glen Cove High School on Oct. 2 to watch Mayor Pamela Panzenbeck debate her challenger, former county comptroller George Maragos, at an event hosted by the League of Women Voters. During the hour-long debate, the candidates were asked questions submitted by residents about issues ranging from rising housing costs, and finances to the city's overall culture. Both candidates offered opening statements about their work in the city and county.

Panzenbeck began by highlighting the city's ranking as the 37th best place to live, according to money.com. She also detailed her family's generational ties to the city, and said she enjoyed the many opportunities her time as mayor gave her to meet more people in the community. She said she's proud of her accomplishments as mayor, some of which included cleaning and revitalizing the city's parks, beaches and water wells. She noted her ability to purchase new equipment for the city's emergency services and department of public works. And she stressed fiscal responsibility was a high priority for her administration, reflecting on the deficit, which she said was reduced from \$2.2 million to just over \$700,000.

Maragos highlighted his experience in finance and managing the county's budget and working hard to balance the budget without raising taxes. Maragos criticized the city's operations, claiming there were issues of flooding, empty downtown stores and said calls went unanswered at City Hall. He referred to the state comptroller's report, which



George Maragos, left, debates incumbent Pamela Panzenbeck for the mayoral seat in Glen Cove.

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has stated Glen Cove is susceptible to fiscal stress, saying this could lead to higher taxes, less services by the city and a lower quality of life.

The first question inquired about what candidates considered to be the city's greatest challenge. Maragos stated mismanagement within the city was his concern, including the use of one-shot revenues that he claims were used to cover underestimated expenses. He believes new equipment for the city's DPW should have been prioritized.

Panzenbeck countered Maragos remarks, saying she purchased two new garbage trucks and equipment for the DPW. Panzenbeck also noted that the city's financial stress report was an improvement from recent years, adding that the city is nearly two points away from a "no stress" designation. She projects the city will conclude the fiscal year with an operating surplus.

When addressing traffic concerns,

Panzenbeck said she understands the concerns of the community, but that the issue was "tricky." She said police responded to complaints of high traffic areas, but she has heard many residents want to follow Huntington's business model to increase the number of businesses in the area. Consequently, this will increase traffic, she said.

Maragos countered by stating the main concerns with traffic stem from speeding and safety. He said he's heard many concerns from residents, who he says feel as though these issues aren't being addressed although residents have addressed Panzenbeck directly. He said his administration would have an "open door" policy with frequent town halls.

In the same vein, Maragos addressed the downtown parking garages, saying delaying repairs will cost the city more money. He believes the city has funds for the repairs, but they are not allocating it to what he believes is a high safe-

ty concern.

Panzenbeck countered by saying she does address those concerned with speeding and that the repairs to the garages have been overdue for 50 years. She said there are no city funds available to repair the structures, and the city is looking to federal grants for repairs.

One question stated there was no recreational center designated for the city's youth. Panzenbeck offered that there were plenty of options for youth, citing the city's beaches. She emphasized that John Maccarone Memorial Stadium was refurbished during her time as mayor, and that it was a "home run" with the city's youth.

Maragos said he's heard complaints about a lack of space for youth, stating, "We have some very nice facilities, but we don't have enough." He cited that the city needs a youth recreational center, a public pool, and that he'd be receptive to other suggestions from the community.

Both candidates addressed the topic of diversity and inclusion within the city. Maragos recalled that as a Republican in 2016, he was advised by his party to not reach out to minority communities to expand the Republican base because they don't typically vote Republican. He claims that mindset is why he became a Democrat in 2016.

Panzenbeck said she was shocked by Maragos response, saying that the city has always been a diverse community, and are members of the city's sports teams and houses of worship.

"I don't think that they feel that they're not a part of our community and haven't been told, 'Don't go and speak to those kinds of people because they're not going to vote for you,'" Panzenbeck said. "I am the mayor of everyone."