

THE RIVERTOWNS Enterprise

The Hometown Newspaper
of Hastings-on-Hudson,
Dobbs Ferry, Ardsley
and Irvington

VOLUME 45, NUMBER 22 • AUGUST 28, 2020

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TIM LAMORTE/RIVERTOWNS ENTERPRISE

Andrew Ryan holds up a sign outside the Hastings Post Office on Aug. 22.

Concerns spur support for area post offices

By Ken Kostik

REGION — Local residents gathered at post offices in Ardsley and Hastings on Saturday, Aug. 22, joining nearly 800 similar community rallies across the country in an effort to highlight the need for adequate mail service as Election Day, Nov. 3, approaches.

With the Covid-19 pandemic pushing more voters toward mail-in ballots, activists have taken up the cause after learning of plans by the Trump administration to defund the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). The proposed measures included the removal of mailboxes and sorting equipment, as well as cutting back hours of operation for branches and overtime for workers around the country.

The moves created a fear that mail-

in ballots would be delivered late and deemed ineligible.

To ease voters' fears, on Aug. 20 Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed into law election reforms that make it easier for New Yorkers to vote and be counted in November. The three-part package includes new measures allowing absentee ballot applications to be submitted to the Board of Elections immediately, expanding protections to allow a voter to get an absentee ballot due to risk or fear of illness, including Covid-19, and ensuring all absentee ballots postmarked on or before Election Day or received by the Board of Elections without a postmark on the day after the election will be counted. Ballots with a postmark demonstrating that they were mailed on or before Election Day will be counted if received by Nov. 10.

"The federal administration has ordered an unprecedented attack on the U.S. Postal Service and with Covid-19 threatening our ability to have safe, in-person voting, these measures are critical to ensuring a successful and fair election at one of the most important moments in our nation's history," Cuomo said in a press release. "These actions will further break down barriers to democracy and will make it easier for all New Yorkers to exercise their right to vote this November."

The rallies in Hastings and Ardsley were small, but firm in their convictions.

Frank Brodhead of Hastings, a founder of Concerned Families of Westchester, a grassroots organization formed in 2001

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Teachers' unions call for more caution

By Jackie Lupo

REGION — An open letter from the leadership of more than 50 teachers' unions in Westchester and Putnam counties questions the safety of "hybrid" learning plans put into place by the majority of school districts, stating they pose "significant risks." The letter states the school districts need to do more to get their re-entry plans right, and until that's possible, they should use the remote option.

Co-signers include the leaders of all four Rivertowns teachers' unions: Nate Morgan of the Hastings Teachers Association, James Groven of the Irving-

ton Faculty Association, Alyson Tina of the Ardsley Congress of Teachers, and Marcia Heffler of the Dobbs Ferry United Teachers.

"To create truly safe re-entry plans, districts would require more time, direction, and resources," the letter states, adding that there "has been a failure in state and federal governments to ensure that adequate testing, PPE [personal protective equipment] and HVAC filtration systems are readily available."

The unions are also skeptical about how districts' plans will play out.

"As anyone with experience planning school events can attest, even

the best plans on paper never match what happens once actual students are brought in," the letter states. "Every plan assumes a well-behaved student body that will follow all directives and maintain masks and social distancing, even during hall passing."

The letter also points out that schools were likely to open understaffed, making "an already unsafe situation even worse." It outlines seven measures that the union leaders consider essential for the buildings to open: upgrading all building-wide HVAC systems to a minimum of MERV-13 filtration, and if this is not

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