I am Ruth Walter, Westchester County Legislator for District 15, which includes the Village of Bronxville and parts of North and East Yonkers.

It’s never easy to lose an election, but this past election was so disappointing, mostly because I love the work of representing 55,000 residents across two municipalities, both Yonkers and Bronxville.

I live in Bronxville, but have spent the last 5 years in all parts of the district, learning the different organizations and communities that make Yonkers great. I live in Bronxville, I own a business here and have raised my two children with my husband Kevin, so the love I have for the Village has spread out across my district in Yonkers as well.

Results show that the Village voters overwhelmingly supported me at 62%. Thank you for the support I have maintained across all parties and ages. I am truly grateful. While turnout was dramatically lower across the district (over 20% fewer voters in Yonkers voted), in the Village, an amazing 1,004 voters came out for me and turnout here was only down about 2%. [If you are watching this now, you have a chance to vote in another election, until 9PM tonight!]

All of this to say, what an honor and a joy it was to work in Westchester on behalf of this amazing district. I want to thank the residents of my district, including those in the Village, for their thoughtful communications on local policy. From Joey Bera commenting on late buses to Peter Thorpe asking about dredging Bronxville lake, it was their input that was the impulse for me to add projects to the County capital budget, in order to improve their quality of life. Projects like the noise camera pilot program, to cut down on noisy mufflers, the bottle refill stations in county parks to cut down on plastic pollution, and the senior fitness parks, to give our senior citizens a space of their own outdoors.

This year, after so much work with local residents on the Bronxville Safe Streets committee, I also put $15 million in our County Capital budget for a Complete Streets matching fund. This fund will allow local municipalities like Bronxville to make improvements to make local roads truly multi-use around the County.

I’m also so proud of the work the County Health Department has done during COVID. Encouraging residents to be safely vaccinated, distributing thousands of free masks and sanitizers and combatting the disinformation and politicization of community health—this is what the dedicated County Health Department does so well. We now know that community health is the foundation of our economy and the dedicated first responders need our partnership to keep residents healthy.

As Chair of the Environment & Health Committee and Vice-Chair of Parks & Recreation, I had the opportunity to work with dedicated and skilled public servants across the administration.

Turning to the Village, I am so honored and grateful to you for your partnership. The Village Trustees and Jim Palmer have really increased their communication and collaboration with the County, first by passing the Model Affordable Housing Ordinance, then by joining the County Consortium, then by accessing a free planning department program for Complete Streets and finally by applying for matching funds from the Stormwater Management Fund. This benefits all Village residents and knowing that I leave you with that tremendous growth in that partnership is extremely satisfying.

I close with an appeal to you as Trustees to consider passing term limits. Running for office is never a decision that someone takes lightly, and I urge you to pass an ordinance to limit your roles to 8 or 10 years. Three of Bronxville’s Trustees were elected after I was, and what energy you have brought to the Village programs in a short time! The Village has a tremendous pool of talent that can be accessed – dedicated professionals from many areas of the business and nonprofit world. They would be eager to serve a term that had limited scope. Under the able management of Jim Palmer, the Village does its work well. The opportunity for leadership that term limits would offer others in the Village would truly be a boon to our Village. Term limits help keep the Village from autocracy, or the belief that any one person must sit in those chairs. County Legislators have 12 year term limits, the County Executive has 8 years. This is an idea I hope you will consider seriously for the best outcome for the Village.

As for me, I hope to have the opportunity to serve at the County level in some future role. I am not done with public service by any means. I will continue my work on Boards and with great organizations across my District—from Bronxville Rotary to Aquehung, the Yonkers Democratic Women’s Political Club. I urge you to continue our fruitful and thoughtful communication—I am always here if you need anything.

Thank you for all you do.