

The  
**WESTCHESTER COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS**  
celebrates

# HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

**Monday, September 18, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.**

**Live streamed from the Board Chamber**

<https://westchestercountyny.legistar.com>

## PROGRAM

**Welcoming Remarks and Acknowledgements**  
Board Chair Vedat Gashi

**Presentation of Proclamations to**



**ISABEL ELSA VILLAR** (*in memoriam*)

Presented by Majority Leader José Alvarado, Legislator  
Benjamin Boykin II & Legislator Jewel Williams Johnson  
*Accepted by Judy Aucar, Executive Director, El Centro Hispano*



**DINORA PACHECO**

Presented by Legislator Colin D. Smith

[see back for more]

**Vedat Gashi**  
*Board Chair*  
Legislator, 4th District

**Colin D. Smith**  
Legislator, 1st District

**Erika L. Pierce**  
Legislator, 2nd District

**Margaret A. Cunzio**  
*Minority Leader*  
Legislator, 3rd District

**Benjamin Boykin II**  
Legislator, 5th District

**Nancy E. Barr**  
*Vice Chair*  
Legislator, 6th District

**Catherine F. Parker**  
Legislator, 7th District

**Jewel Williams Johnson**  
Legislator, 8th District

**Catherine Borgia**  
Legislator, 9th District

**Damon R. Maher**  
Legislator, 10th District

**Terry Clements**  
Legislator, 11th District

**David Imamura**  
Legislator, 12th District

**Tyrae Woodson-Samuels**  
*Majority Whip*  
Legislator, 13th District

**David J. Tubiolo**  
Legislator, 14th District

**James Nolan**  
*Minority Whip*  
Legislator, 15th District

**Symra Brandon**  
Legislator, 16th District

**José I. Alvarado**  
*Majority Leader*  
Legislator, 17th District





**ISABEL ELSA VILLAR** immigrated to the U.S. with her family in 1966 from Cuba. Upon enrolling soon thereafter at White Plains High School, she was immediately sensitized to the problems newcomers to this country face because of the language barrier and cultural differences. Her experiences in those early years were instrumental in shaping her future vocation and mission.

After receiving her B.A. in Political Science/Latin American Studies from Manhattanville College, Isabel was hired in 1972 as a bilingual middle school teacher in Norwalk, CT. In 1978 she began teaching American History, ESOL and Spanish at Brien McMahon High School. During those years she earned three master's degrees, as well as her license in counseling. In 1988, Isabel became a guidance counselor and a decade later founded the Brien McMahon High School Hispanic Alumni Association with the mission of having Hispanic alumni serve as role models and mentors for current

students.

In spite of a demanding full-time job in education, Isabel wanted to do even more to help those newly arrived in this country. In 1974 she co-founded El Centro Hispano in White Plains. This community organization offers a variety of programs to Hispanic residents of White Plains and Westchester County. The programs currently offered by El Centro Hispano are changing the lives of their clients through education, technology, support services, cultural events, outreach, counseling and empowerment, and special activities. These programs educate and inform the immigrant community about how to exercise their rights in this country and prepare them to succeed and make a better future for themselves and their children. From its inception, El Centro Hispano was housed at St. Bernard's Roman Catholic Church. The support of the parish over the years enabled the fledging organization to flourish. In early 2020, it became clear that El Centro Hispano needed a new home. Although plagued by health problems, Isabel devoted her last years to making that dream a reality. Thanks to her vision and hard work, as well as the support of many individuals and community organizations, in June of 2022 El Centro Hispano purchased a building on Central Avenue in White Plains. On June 26, 2023, El Centro Hispano opened its doors and began serving the Hispanic community in its new location. Luckily she was able to see her vision realized before her passing on July 12th.

Throughout her long and distinguished career, Isabel served on numerous committees, councils and advisory boards, and was honored with forty-two different awards in her professional life. A very special moment was having a section of Lexington Avenue in White Plains renamed *Isabel Elsa Villar Boulevard* in her honor in October of 2013, which stands as a testament to her as an extraordinary mentor and to her remarkable achievements on behalf of the Hispanic community.



**DINORA PACHECO** was born in a small town called Villa Isabela of the province of Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic. She is the fourth of seven siblings. Her mother passed away when she was 17, which led to her pursue a nursing career. She became the head nurse of the former president of the Dominican Republic, Jacobo Majluta, with whom she traveled as his private health staff. She came to the United States in October of 1992, where she married Freddy Pacheco, an immigrant from Ecuador who she met in their ESL class. They have three children: Loani, Paola, and Adael. They were in search of the American Dream which meant settling and purchasing a home in Peekskill.

Dinora became a member of The Church of Assumption, where Father John Higgins introduced her to current Peekskill Councilman Ramon Fernandez. That encounter encouraged her to join a group of Dominican Fellows of the church, the Altagracian group. She and Councilman Fernandez began to share their mutual inclination to help those in need, as happened in 2015 as the result of a fire that left four families homeless. After the Red Cross was no longer able to provide assistance, Dinora sheltered them in her home. Collaborating with former Peekskill Mayor Frank Catalina, Councilman Fernandez and several others in the community, they were finally able to find permanent residences for the victims. Her involvement in this tragic event was the catalyst for her future career. She realized the need to create an organization to assist the community when emergencies arose. That is how the Peekskill Hispanic Community (PHC) Corp. was born; a 501c3 non-profit that aims to help the community regardless of race, sexual identity, political affiliation, or creed. She is one of the original co-founders and is currently president of the organization that supports those in need in such cases as the 2016 Ecuador earthquake where at least 676 people were killed and over 16,000 injured, the 2017 Mexico earthquake where at least 225 people died, and Hurricane Maria in 2017 that hit Puerto Rico and about 5,740 died.

PHC Corp. has also helped families with medical issues such as a 9-year-old child with cancer get her grandmother into this country to be in the hospital for her bone marrow transplant. With the help of former mayors, congressmembers and the Consulate of Ecuador, they have been able to assist other individuals with organ donations. As president, Dinora has initiated other events in PHC such as the Hispanic Heritage Festival which helps them collect funds to help people in need. She has also been fortunate to work 26 years as the personal assistant for the Rockefeller family, a family that has included her as one of their own and is one of PHC Corp's biggest benefactors.