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November 8, 2022

Bowman, Ex-Scarsdale Mayor in 16th Congressional District Matchup

By Bailey Hosfelt

Dr. Miriam Levitt Flisser, a Westchester pediatrician, medical director in the Bronxville School District and former Scarsdale mayor, is vying to unseat Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-Yonkers) in the upcoming race for New York's 16th Congressional District, which includes all of southern Westchester, including White Plains, and a portion of the northern Bronx.

Having accepted the nomination from the Westchester Republican Committee, Levitt Flisser believes her deep roots in the district position her well to represent the constituents in Congress.

Born in Eastern Europe, Levitt Flisser immigrated with her parents to the United States, settling in the Bronx. After graduating from the Bronx High School of Science, Levitt Flisser attended New York University's former University Heights campus and Albert Einstein College of Medicine. She completed her medical training at Montefiore Hospital, where she has served on the pediatric faculty.

"I have a great deal of experience in our district, and many of the projects I worked on are still helping the residents," Levitt Flisser said, noting that she helped Bronxville schools remain open throughout the pandemic, developed a system of rain gardens that mitigate flooding of the Bronx River and volunteers with FEMA.

"I have one-on-one experience with families all the time, both at the school and in my practice in Bronxville," she added. "That sets me up to be a very good representative for our constituents, and I think they deserve that."

Bowman, who first ousted longtime Democrat Rep. Eliot Engel and then easily coasted to victory with 84 percent of the vote in the 2020 general election, believes that once an educator, always an educator.

"As (a) representative in Congress, I have spent my time not just teaching others what our district needs but learning from my constituents, listening to the district and growing as a leader," Bowman said.



Dr. Miriam Levitt Flisser

In his freshman term, Bowman said he's brought hundreds of millions of dollars back to the district to invest directly in its towns and communities, including more than \$5 million in community project funding and federal relief funds in the 2022 fiscal year.

Seeing the struggle parents and children have been facing throughout the pandemic, Bowman said he worked to ensure vaccination sites were open and accessible in the district. Additionally, Bowman brought resources into the district following the devastating effects of Hurricane Ida and passed legislation condemning white supremacy.

"In the face of countless challenges, we are showing up, putting in the work and fighting back," Bowman added.

For Bowman, education, workforce development and public safety are some of the key issues today.

"Fixing our economy and public education system is how we reduce inflation, support working families, increase affordability and enhance public



Rep. Jamaal Bowman

safety because the more opportunities we give folks, the less they need to resort to crime," Bowman said.

"No child should have to worry about where they are going to sleep that night, if they will eat or if their parents will get the support they need to make their ends meet," Bowman added. "I see my time in Congress as a way to make America live up to its promise and fulfill its ability to give everyone a chance to grow and thrive."

For Levitt Flisser, the four main issues currently facing the district are the economy, crime, education and energy costs.

"We have an increase in crime in our county, and I think this is due to the failure to keep the border closed, defunding the police and not incarcerating criminals," Levitt Flisser said.

Additionally, she would like to see school systems that are traditional, multicultural and accountable to parents, independent fuel production so the United States doesn't have to depend on foreign oil, increased funds for police departments, better industries with good-paying jobs in the district and sensible uses of taxes.

If elected, Levitt Flisser would prioritize legislation focused on increasing public safety, including securing the border, setting up proper systems for handling criminals and earmarking more funds for local police departments.

"A secure border is a federal issue that can be immediately arranged," Levitt Flisser said.

On the campaign trail, Levitt Flisser criticized Rep. Bowman's "reckless spending" and decision to pull his support for the Israel Relations Normalization Act after a trip to Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

"Israel is a beacon, one of America's greatest allies and provides stability in the Middle East for American interests,"

Levitt Flisser said. "The Abraham Accords were a great step forward in Israel, and that was not supported by our representative."

Bowman said that he supports freedom, security, prosperity and self-determination for both Israelis and Palestinians and a peaceful two-state solution.

"Israel has a right to exist, and Palestinians also deserve a state for themselves," Bowman explained, noting that he believes the United States must exercise greater diplomacy toward the conflict.

"We have to make sure that all of our actions are in service of the ultimate goal of peace and security in the region. We can never lose sight of that goal," Bowman added. "The truth is (Levitt Flisser) is grasping at straws."

Bowman highlighted that at a time when families in the district are hurting and struggling to put food on the table, it is his job as an elected official to ease that pain and ensure Congress is tackling issues such as skyrocketing inflation, gas prices and food shortages.

"That's why I proudly voted for the Inflation Reduction Act and why I also introduced a bill in the House that would fight greedy price gouging by corporations, which is a key cause of our current crisis," Bowman said.

Levitt Flisser said she does not believe inflation can be stopped with massive government spending.

"Since February 2021, we've increased government spending by \$9 trillion," Levitt Flisser said. "We will not be able to improve unless we have control over that."

Levitt Flisser said she has a different view of residents' needs than Bowman and believes the district deserves a representative with common-sense centrist values.

"I don't think we should become even more socialist and progressive," Levitt Flisser said.

She said all the public service she does, including her current bid for Congress, is inspired by her gratitude for the United States, having immigrated to the country as a young girl.

"I'm a lifelong New Yorker who was raised in the Bronx. I want to see this country and New York succeed, and I will represent the people," Levitt Flisser said.

Bowman said he knows what the district's families need to thrive and has dedicated the last two years to make sure they have the resources to do just that.

"If re-elected, I will continue working for families and everyday people, not corporations," Bowman said.

The district has not had a Republican representative elected to Congress since 1949.

Early voting takes place from Oct. 29 to Nov. 6, with the general election on Nov. 8.

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Maloney, Lawler Square Off in Closely Watched 17th Congressional Race

By Martin Wilbur

New York's 17th Congressional District race between Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (D-Cold Spring) and Assemblyman Mike Lawler (R-Pearl River) has become one of the most watched House of Representatives contests in the United States.

Maloney, a five-term incumbent is now running for a seat that represents the northern half of Westchester, all of Putnam and Rockland counties and a small portion of Dutchess County. He would no longer represent Orange County and cedes most of his constituency in Dutchess.

He is the chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and the reported \$9 million that has been poured into this race by the Republican Party reflects the GOP's growing confidence in taking back the House.

Lawler, who is completing his first term in the state Assembly after serving in former Westchester County Executive's Rob Astorino's administration, said he got into the race because runaway inflation and gas prices and rising crime in areas of the state are felt by everyone.

"The issues impact everybody, whether you're a Republican, a Democrat or an independent. It doesn't matter," said Lawler, who easily dispatched four rivals in the August primary. "The cost of living is hurting families all across this district. You look at the surge in crime and the impact that that's having, they don't feel safe. They don't feel safe going into New York City, they don't feel safe going into their own communities."

Maloney said Lawler and the Republican Party are trying to capitalize off of constituents' fears rather than putting forth a plan to fix the nation's problems. While crime is rising in areas of the state, that's not what's happening in the district, he said, where indexed crimes have declined in recent years.

In his current district, Maloney said he has brought back \$7 million to assist local police departments and helped the House

pass the Invest to Protect Act, which would appropriate \$60 million to local police departments with less than 125 officers over five years. The first meaningful gun safety legislation was signed into law in 28 years.

He said Lawler is spreading "a lot of anger and hate and racially-tinged messaging and imaging."

"We've got a plan to give you safer communities; he's got a plan to win an election," Maloney said. "I hope people will vote for candidates that want to fix the problem."

He also said that while Lawler worked for Astorino, that administration reduced funding for the Westchester County police.

"So his record is cutting law enforcement; mine is for funding good policing," Maloney said.

Lawler countered that bail reform in New York has been a disaster, leading to a 76 percent rise in index crimes – serious offenses such as willful homicide, forcible rape, robbery, burglary, aggravated assault, larceny over \$50, motor vehicle theft and arson – in New York City since cashless bail went into effect. Other locations such as Rochester have also seen disturbing spikes in crime, he said.

He said Democrats overreacted to the problem of extended incarceration at Rikers Island due to a severe backlog of cases in New York City's courts, and decided it was okay to impose cashless bail.

"You deal with that, you don't upend the entire system and release people who are committing violent offenses back on the street before the paperwork is even filed," Lawler said.

He said unless the state enforces its laws and crime subsidies, he would support the federal government stepping in and cutting off the state's funding until the law is changed.

As crucial as public safety is, Lawler said the spiraling cost of living, including the price of gas, would be his top priority if elected. Reining in excessive spending, increasing domestic energy production and



Assemblyman Mike Lawler



Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney

extraction of natural gas and addressing the limit on the state and local tax deduction are all steps that could help families cope with surging costs, he said.

"We're losing people and businesses in record numbers and it's because people can't afford to live here, they can't afford to run their businesses here, and so this is multipronged, and we have to get real about it," Lawler said. "People are going to be suffering for quite a while."

Earlier in the campaign, Maloney pledged to work to get inflation down to close to 2 percent. Toward that end, one of the most important pieces of legislation was the Inflation Reduction Act, which was signed into law by President Joe Biden in August. It will cap out-of-pocket Medicare costs at \$2,000 a year. Prescription drugs will be capped at \$35.

"This is thousands of dollars for folks that are right now paying, and it's not just the cap and out-of-pocket costs, we are finally going to take on the big drug companies and negotiate prices in the Medicare program and that's a big deal," Maloney said.

Meanwhile, Congress and the Biden administration have been collaborating on investing throughout the country, including \$20 billion in new investments in the Hudson Valley through the CHIPS and Science Act, also signed by the President in August. It is designed to strengthen American manufacturing, supply chains and national security and invest in research and development, science and technology.

Maloney pledged that if the Democrats hold onto the House and pick up two seats in the Senate, Roe v. Wade will be enshrined into federal law. It would be one of the first pieces of legislation that would be voted on and signed in January, he said.

Since June, when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe and sent it back to the states, 13 states have outlawed abortion and another 13 are poised to restrict or outlaw it as well, Maloney said.

Lawler said he is a firm supporter of abortion being handled at the state level. He would not support a ban at the federal level.

"Over time that will be up to the voters in New York, along with their representatives, to determine what is the best way forward,"

Lawler said. "I don't think this should be dealt with at a national level."

Lawler said he would work toward immigration reform, since the current system isn't working. He said he wants people who want to come to the U.S. legally to have the ability to do so.

For the roughly 20 million undocumented individuals, those who have been here a long time and with family in the country, they should have a pathway toward legalization, if not citizenship. For those who have committed crimes, those people should be sent back to their countries.

The country needs to secure the border to stop the massive influx of migrants, many of them fleeing drugs and gangs in their home countries, Lawler said. Many of those drugs also find their way into the U.S., contributing to the drug problem here.

"If we don't get serious about taking on the cartels and putting an end to this, more and more people are going to die needlessly because of it," Lawler said.

Maloney agreed that the nation can't have a massive influx of people, but the U.S. must respect its own asylum laws.

"I would honor those protections," he said. "We need a comprehensive solution to our immigration problems, but we can start with this...letting Dreamers have a path to legal status and citizenship, letting farm workers and (those with) temporary protected status pay whatever fine you want, wait as much time as you want but bring them into the light of legal status."

Maloney vowed to strengthen Social Security and Medicare through the various proposals that have been floated. However, he decried comments by House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy that suggested recurring programs like these to be voted at regular intervals.

Lawler also said the country must honor its commitments to its citizens by maintaining the Social Security and Medicare programs. He would favor a blue-ribbon panel to work on coming up with long-term solutions to ensure its solvency.

Both candidates back continued support of Ukraine in their fight against Russia.

Great Chefs Culinary and Wine Series Returns

The Westchester Community College Foundation will be hosting its annual Great Chefs event, featuring more than a dozen chefs from leading restaurants in Westchester County and gourmet food, fine wine and alcohol purveyors.

Great Chefs 2022 will be held Tuesday, Nov. 15 from 6:30 to 9 p.m. on the Valhalla campus of Westchester Community College (WCC).

Guests will have the opportunity to meet and mingle with culinary experts, enjoy a tasting of special pre-holiday menus and learn first-hand about their culinary backgrounds. These celebrated chefs will showcase their culinary specialties with the assistance of SUNY WCC's Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management students.

Participating restaurants include: Ace Endico; Augustine's Salumeria; The Cookery; DiCicco & Sons; Ladle of Love; Meraki Taverna; Pub Street; Rocco's; Sam's of Gedney Way; Tredici North; and Trotta Pasta. Beverage sponsors are Captain Lawrence Brewery, Thompson's Cider Mill and The Wine Enthusiast.

Proceeds will benefit the WCC Foundation's Scholarship Fund and support students facing food insecurity. Turkey Dinner Tickets will also be offered; for every \$25 donation, a Thanksgiving meal can be donated to a student family in need.

Due to limited seating, it is recommended that people buy their tickets in advance at www.sunywcc.edu/great-chefs.

Stewart-Cousins Faces Republican Challenger for State Senate Seat

By Andrew Vitelli

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, who has represented the 35th State Senate District since 2007, has a challenge this year from political newcomer Kristen Kerr, a Republican.

It is the first time the Yonkers resident has had general election competition since 2014 in a district that favors Democrats three to one; the district lines will change next year, as Stewart-Cousins returns to represent Pleasantville and Mount Pleasant as a result of redistricting.

"In these times especially, we really do need experienced leadership. We need progressive leadership," Stewart-Cousins said. "We need people who have the courage to fight back."

Kerr, who most recently served as a trial preparation assistant in the Bronx District Attorney's office, said concerns about crime and bail reform laws championed by Stewart-Cousins spurred her to enter the race.

"What I saw first-hand were the victims who were not getting justice," said Kerr, an Elmsford resident. "Andrea Stewart-Cousins and others are not listening to (New York City) Mayor (Eric) Adams. They are not listening to the DAs and the ADAs saying, 'Look, you've got to change this.'"

Stewart-Cousins, who has served as majority leader since 2019, said her top priority is inflation and building the state's economy. She touted recent investments by chips manufacturers, including a recent \$3 million expansion at the SEEQC facility in Elmsford and a \$100 billion investment by Micron in Poughkeepsie, spurred in part by federal legislation signed this summer.

"We are continuing to, I think, be leaders in terms of economic development on the quantum levels but also on the local levels as well," she said.

The legislature accelerated a \$1.2 billion middle class tax cut to be implemented next

year instead of 2025 to provide relief sooner to families.

"COVID recovery is still a real thing, and so we will continue to work on stabilizing the economy and making sure that people have what they need in order to participate in the economy," Stewart-Cousins said.

Kerr, an electrical engineer by trade who has also worked as a New York City public school teacher, said she believes tax revenues collected in municipalities are not benefiting local communities.

"It's going up to Albany, and not all of it is coming back to us," Kerr said. "Where is all this money going? It doesn't seem to be coming back."

She questioned the decision to raise the state's minimum wage to \$15 per hour, floating the idea of a lower it to about \$10 an hour for small businesses. Kerr criticized the creation of a \$2.1 billion excluded workers fund, which allocated funding to New Yorkers ineligible for federal benefits during the pandemic, including undocumented immigrants.

Kerr said she was a registered Democrat until 2020, but felt the party became too radical, especially regarding public safety.

"My father was a police officer, my husband is a retired police officer," Kerr said. "When you don't have law and order everything is so chaotic. You can't walk down the street without being afraid of being mugged."

Kerr said the legislature had "good intentions" in passing bail reform, adding that eliminating cash bail makes sense for people charged with minor crimes. But the state went too far in letting dangerous criminals back onto the streets.

"Certain people who are low-income defendants may not have the money to pay for bail," she said. "But you can't just release everybody from jail, especially with a long rap sheet."

Kerr also opposes Raise the Age legislation, passed in 2017, which increases the age



Khristen Kerr

someone can be prosecuted as an adult to from 16 to 18 years old.

Stewart-Cousins also said crime is a top issue confronting the state, but has pushed back at claims that bail reform is to blame. She points to rising rates of crime across the country, including in states run by Republicans. The reform was meant to ensure non-violent offenders do not languish in prison awaiting trial because they cannot afford bail.

"We are not trying to incarcerate people because they've been accused of a misdemeanor and cannot pay bail," she said.

Stewart-Cousins said it is up to the prosecutor to charge the crimes appropriately and for the judge to set bail for suspects accused of more serious offenses.

She also touted laws passed to fight gun violence, including strengthening background checks for gun purchases and red flag laws.

One of Stewart-Cousins' priorities when taking over as majority leader was to codify Roe v. Wade into state law. In 2019, the legislature approved legal abortion through 24 weeks. The Reproductive Health Act also



Sen. Andrea Stewart-Cousins

allows abortion until birth if the mother's health, including mental health, is deemed to be at risk.

Kerr is generally pro-choice and opposes the kinds of abortion bans enacted in some Republican states, but supports restrictions later in pregnancy. She is when restrictions should take place.

"How can you say, from conception to nine months, that that is not a child?" she asked. "I think it's too extreme, so we need to figure out something that is reasonable."

Kerr also believes expanding school choice and banning the teaching of Critical Race Theory and sexually explicit materials in public schools. She pointed to Florida's Parental Rights in Education bill as a model.

Both candidates said that they oppose mandating the COVID-19 vaccine for schoolchildren. Stewart-Cousins said she is open to revisiting the issue if the data changes, while Kerr believes it "should always be up to a parent," though she supports vaccines for children.

Mayer Seeks Re-election in 37th State Senate District Contest

By Martin Wilbur

State Sen. Shelley Mayer (D-Yonkers) is bidding for her third full term in the state legislature's upper chamber next week. Mayer has served in the Senate since the spring of 2018 when she won a special election to succeed George Latimer in the 37th District after he became county executive.

Prior to being elected to the Senate Mayer was an Assembly member for six years.

This year, Mayer takes on psychology counselor, educator and businessman Frank Murtha of Scarsdale, who appears on the Republican line.

As chair of the Senate Education Committee, Mayer arguably has one of the most important positions in the legislature outside of Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie. Helping students and schools bounce back from the upheaval caused by COVID-19 has been a top priority.

"We put money in and the feds put money into having mental health professionals in schools, and schools have done a great job," Mayer said. "But that's not the only



Sen. Shelley Mayer

solution and that's not forever. That federal money is going to end in a few years."

Introducing pre-K statewide was a key focus to help working families along with funding afterschool and extended programs and providing services for children with disabilities.



Frank Murtha

Education was also a key motivation for Murtha jumping into the race, along with public safety and the cost of living. Never politically active, Murtha became disturbed with his own kids' education, particularly in the wake of COVID-19. He said he identified what he called "a certain

wokeness," where the curriculum focuses too much on people's differences.

"I found myself thinking this is not healthy and it's not necessary for kids to do things this way," said Murtha, who wished more schools found a way to stay open during the pandemic. "We need to focus on what we have in common, not what we don't."

If elected, he would concentrate on officials respecting parents' rights and listening to their concerns. He would also like to introduce financial literacy into the curriculum for older students.

Murtha said he would also work to reverse cashless bail and to restore judges' discretion, which has been a failure. He would also support additional resources dedicated to the police, including additional training, so they can do the job to the best of their ability.

Mayer doesn't completely disagree on some points, particularly on making greater use of a judge's discretion. She acknowledged the original bail reform needed revisions, although she agreed with the general concept that money should not determine whether a suspect is

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New Senate District Draws Assembly Staffer, Mayor to Face Off

By Abby Luby

Democrat Julie Shiroishi is running against Republican Poughkeepsie Mayor Robert Rolison in the newly-created 39th Senate District, which spans Putnam Valley and Philipstown in Putnam County and parts of Dutchess and Orange counties.

Since 2007, Shiroishi has lived in Beacon with her husband, an English professor at John Jay College, and their two high school-aged children. She is the daughter of an immigrant housewife and a Japanese American truck driver, who graduated from the University of California, Berkeley.

A professional in the newspaper and book publishing industry, Shiroishi became chief of staff for Assemblyman Jonathan Jacobson (D-Newburgh) in 2019. Shiroishi is running on the Democratic and Working Families Party lines.

Rolison, a lifelong Poughkeepsie resident, majored in criminal justice at Marist College. In 1982, he joined the Town of Poughkeepsie Police Department where he served 12 years in the Patrol Division. He was promoted to detective, a post he held for 14 years.

Rolison, who has a wife and son, was elected to the Dutchess County Legislature and represented the City and Town of Poughkeepsie for 12 years. He was elected mayor in 2016 and is serving his second term. He is the son of the late state Sen. Jay P. Rolison Jr.

Rolison said significant migration from New York City to Poughkeepsie during the pandemic impacted the city's housing costs and availability.

"Although Poughkeepsie has been successful in meeting the needs of the community with affordable housing, we still have a housing challenge," he said. "But people should have the opportunity to improve their housing if they find themselves in a better financial situation."

The influx of new residents also concerns Shiroishi.

"These people earn higher incomes than most Hudson Valley residents," she said.

"Building and providing more affordable housing means we need to create public-private partnerships and offer developers incentives to build affordable housing."

Rolison criticized the state's current \$220 billion budget for being the largest in state history and for not using federal funds to pay down the unemployment insurance debt.

"That debt is being passed on to businesses and that's a concerning burden for many small and regular businesses who will pass those costs on to the consumer," Rolison said. "Prices will go up, which contributes to inflation and linked to population declines with

people leaving the state because of the high cost of living."

Shiroishi said the 2023 state budget reflects a strong fiscal status. Although federal relief funds are being spent, she said that investment will have a positive impact on New York's future.

"In Syracuse a megacomplex of computer chip plants is being built, the TV and film industries are growing here in the Hudson Valley and we are moving forward to developing a strong renewable industry," Shiroishi said. "Investments are being made toward New York's future, something I feel good about."

Shiroishi said she supports the state's \$4.2 billion environmental bond that is on the ballot, which addresses wastewater management, drinking water, aging lead pipes and water infrastructure, among other initiatives.

"This bond promotes less reliance on fossil fuels, which contributes to climate change, and will give us incentives to build more green infrastructure such as electric vehicle charging stations," she said.

Rolison also supports the bond.

"We have to make these investments which are big costs. In the long run it will help the taxpayer," he said.

Rolison maintained that the state's bail reform law is responsible for increased crime.

"You see individual criminals getting back out and reoffending. We've lost the ability to manage and help that population," Rolison said. "It's not just about throwing people in jail, that's not the design of the criminal justice system."

Rolison said the system is unable to assess a criminal's behavioral issues.

"It used to be if someone was in custody in a local county facility, that's where we could do triage and see how to help people," he added. "The criminal justice system is not working and we have to be clear about that. Public safety is not a partisan issue."

Shiroishi supports the law, but said it is confusing since it has changed so many times.

"This law is incredibly complicated," Shiroishi acknowledged. "It's not to punish people for having committed a crime but to compel them to come to court. We need to look at the unintended consequences of the law and give judges and district attorneys discretion to decide if a crime rises to the level of being eligible for bail or not."

Obtaining state funds already appropriated to fix deteriorating local roads, bridges, water and sewer systems is a project Shiroishi worked on in Albany with Jacobson.

"Working with municipalities on how to access that funding is a role of a state legislator," she said. "The district must be aware of the availability of particular infrastructure grants



Robert Rolison



Julie Shiroishi

and make a concerted effort to reach out to needy municipalities. Often there are federal monies just sitting there."

Rolison said the difficulty for municipalities to obtain funds for infrastructure projects is an issue frequently raised at Conference of Mayors' meetings.

"We try to figure out how to access monies that are available," he said. "It gets a bit cumbersome to get funds allocated to local municipalities and cities who just don't have the wherewithal to put money into grant writing."

Rolison said he has established good working relationships with state entities to better understand how to apply for infrastructure funding.

"But this issue needs to be looked at close," he said. "There has to be an easier way to do it."

Shiroishi said it is crucial for New York State to be a leader in supporting reproductive rights for women since the U.S. Supreme Court decision that overturned Roe v. Wade.

"I am 100 percent pro-choice and we need to make sure those coming here for an abortion and their healthcare providers are protected," Shiroishi said. "The majority of residents in New York believe in a woman's right to choose and we can't take that for granted."

"The Dobbs decision has not had a real impact on New York State," Rolison countered. "When I decided to seek office for Senate in May 2022, part of the reasoning was to go to Albany and not to stand between women and their healthcare or their doctor. That hasn't changed because of Dobbs."

Training and finding good paying jobs for

young people is a priority for Shiroishi.

"We need to create pathways for young people to access the work place," she said.

"That means partnering with local union leaders about education programs and connecting companies and schools to teach necessary skills needed to enter the workforce."

Shiroishi has connected with and sees a possible partnership with Dutchess Community College and local manufacturing to create training programs.

Rolison said Poughkeepsie started Children's Cabinet two years ago, a successful program that prepares students for a career.

"An independent group of county and state officials has partnered with educational institutions to create an atmosphere where a student can learn," he said. "We need to understand what the opportunities are as well as the barriers to jobs that are available."

Because of his years serving local and county government, Rolison said his experience would be an asset to the state legislature.

"I'm very proud of my record as someone who is able to be very bipartisan and who can work across the aisle," Rolison said. "In order to work better together we need to respect each other despite our different opinions."

Shiroishi said her work history makes her a strong proponent for economic opportunities in the district.

"There is a manufacturing renaissance and an important hub for education in the Hudson Valley," Shiroishi said. "My experience in the private sector makes me a good advocate in Albany since I am solutions-oriented and have a clear lens on what needs to get done."

Mayer Seeks Re-election in 37th State Senate District Contest

continued from previous page

released awaiting trial.

However, Republicans have exaggerated the negative impact of bail reform on crime rates, Mayer said. She said she strongly supports law enforcement, but there must also be justice. Plus, anecdotal reports of prosecutors and judges steering away from bail for offenses that could require is concerning, Mayer said.

"I make it my business to continue to

talk to police departments, public officials, people on the ground," she said. "What is your opinion? What do you think?"

Murtha said he would aggressively look for ways to cut taxes to help families survive. Furthermore, the state should reconsider its limitations on natural gas, which is economically efficient, he said. Renewables are part of the equation, but until they became a larger piece of the energy puzzle, other strategies are crucial.

"We all want clean, efficient, affordable

energy and we're on our way there, but in the meantime, we need an all-of-the-above energy policy because we're not meeting the needs of the people and that needs to come first," Murtha said.

Mayer is a strong supporter of the \$4.2 billion environmental bond that would not only make a sizeable investment in improving water and sewage infrastructure but also helps school districts with converting their bus fleets to electric.

Murtha said he wasn't familiar with all

of the aspects of the proposition but that it sounded like a lot of money.

Mayer recognizes that Westchester and other areas of the state must find a way to provide more housing for the middle class, including more rent protections for people living in unregulated apartments.

"I'm worried about the future if only rich and poor people can live here," she said.

Harckham Looks to Fend Off Challenger Arena in 40th Senate District

By Martin Wilbur

State Sen. Peter Harckham (D-Lewisboro) isn't one to rest on his laurels.

Despite sponsoring more than 50 pieces of approved legislation this year alone, including 23 related to substance abuse and treatment, the two-term senator wants to accomplish more.

"There's still work to be done," Harckham said. "Our economy is facing challenges, we're still coming out of COVID, we have more work to do on education."

This election cycle, his opponent in the 40th Senate District is Republican Gina Arena of Somers. If that name sounds familiar it's because Arena ran twice, in 2019 and 2021, for the Westchester Board of Legislators. She said those two candidacies were valuable learning experiences, opportunities to become more knowledgeable about the process, her community and herself.

"I'm a people person, so I felt like I wasn't done," Arena said. "I felt like there was something, there was more (to give)."

For Arena, this year's election is about affordability for families and keeping local communities safe in northern Westchester and Putnam County. She said her children can't afford to remain here like she and her husband were able to do after growing up in Bedford and Katonah, respectively.

"The idea that they can't have what we had makes me sad and I want to make it easier for people," said Arena, who works for Westchester County's Department of Labs and Research.



Gina Arena

State representatives often talk about bringing state money home to help constituents, but she said that's not helping households. The acceleration of the middle-class tax cut to next year is nice, but Arena said it is insufficient because of high school taxes, soaring energy prices and inflation.

Arena would also like to see the permanent suspension of the gas tax, something that Republicans have previously proposed.

Harckham said there has been tax savings with the introduction of the enhanced STAR program for seniors and property tax relief, initiatives that have saved \$2 billion each.

His proposal for as-of-right accessory dwelling units was strenuously denounced by municipal leaders in both parties earlier this year, but Harckham said that is an issue that



Sen. Peter Harckham

must be addressed to make the state more affordable.

"It's a state issue and it's a local issue and we have to continue to work together because the Regional Plan Association tells us that we're not building units, enough housing units of any kind to keep pace with jobs being created," Harckham said.

Arena said public safety is the other top issue. She draws a correlation between bail reform and the state's higher crime rate. She said the legislature correctly identified trying to help suspects of minor offenses so they wouldn't be incarcerated for months if they couldn't afford bail, but neglected to consult the experts.

"You have to ask the boots on the ground what works and what doesn't work," Arena

said. "When you don't do that, you're going to have a failure."

She said Harckham has cited lower crime rates in the district, but there have been serious crimes taking place that until now have been foreign to most local residents.

Harckham said the increase in crime in Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx have skewed the statewide numbers. Crime is down 10 percent in Westchester and 9 percent in Putnam over the past year, he said.

"We have good police departments, but we have the holistic ingredients for safe communities," Harckham said. "We have good schools with robust afterschool programs, we have world class healthcare, we have access to jobs, transportation, social services. These are things that are the denominators."

Harckham proudly points to his record in passing nearly two dozen substance abuse bills in 2022 alone, possibly none more important than ending prior notification for Medicaid-assisted treatment.

The senator also cited his commitment to infrastructure, including helping to secure money for the Route 9A corridor study. He is working on funding a Route 35 study from the Connecticut border to the Hudson River.

Arena said as a mother of eight children (she lost one son to brain cancer), including a daughter with autism and another who battled opioid addiction, she is aware of the immense challenges facing families who must navigate schools, healthcare and social services. Despite improvements, Arena wants to help other families.

"Parents are still struggling," Arena said.



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Political Newcomer Makes Assembly Run Against Paulin

By Abby Luby

Assemblywoman Amy Paulin (D-Scarsdale) has represented the 88th Assembly District since 2001. She chairs the Assembly Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions and serves on the Rules, Education and Health committees.

Challenging Paulin is Thomas Fix Jr., making his first foray into the political arena and running on the Republican and Conservative lines. He is a lifelong Eastchester resident and lives with his wife and two teenage children. Fix earned a business degree from Iona College. He recently retired running a True Value hardware store in Eastchester.

Paulin warned the state's \$220 billion budget for 2023 could be impacted by a recession.

"The economy is faltering and that impacts everyone," she said. "On the one hand our constituents need resources, but on the other hand the state may not have them. We have to be fiscally prudent and it's a balancing act we have to get through."

Fix said the current budget increases taxes, causing middle class residents to move from New York.

"Government has become too big and takes on too many things that should be handled by the private sector," Fix said. "Spending on programs like Medicare concerns me where there seems to be a track record of waste and potential fraud."

On the ballot is New York's \$4.2 billion environmental bond act to improve and restore natural resources and reduce climate change impacts.

"This bond is very much needed," said

Paulin, who chaired the Energy Committee from 2013 to 2017 and encouraged renewable energy. Paulin has long opposed nuclear power.

"This region is so dense which is why Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant closed," she added. "People believed and feared an accident could happen. That doesn't change by having smaller nuclear plants. We have to look at other options."

Fix favors small modular nuclear reactors while developing renewable energy sources.

"We have to back up wind and solar, especially if there's a torrential hurricane and wind mills and solar panels are ripped up," he said.

Fix said the Environmental Bond Act shows positive stewardship of the planet, but he is skeptical.

"My concern is the approved bond will become a power grab by some (renewable) businesses who will use it for their own personal and financial gain," Fix said.

Affordable housing requires local involvement, according to Paulin. She voted against the proposed Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) law, which would have allowed affordable accessory rental units in a house or on residential properties.

"Bypassing or eliminating local involvement, you're not going to see real affordable housing built," Paulin pointed out. "For instance, Pelham, (a) community I represent, doesn't allow on-street parking during the evening. How can you build affordable housing units with no driving and no place to park your car?"

Fix opposes state overreach into local zoning laws.

"If a community wants to keep a certain



Assemblywoman Amy Paulin



Thomas Fix Jr.

neighborhood as single-family units, that should be allowed without the state interfering," he said. "Builders in my hardware store thought it fair that 10 percent of new development units had to be affordable housing. I believe that's reasonable."

The intent of the cashless bail reform was a good idea, but Fix doubts the law's impact.

"They took a broad sword to the bail laws where they should have used a scalpel," Fix mentioned. "Some smaller crimes might (appear) innocent and shouldn't require bail. The system is overloaded with those accused of petty crimes who are kept incarcerated because they can't afford bail. But we can't tolerate repeat offenders. There's got to be a

compromise."

The original bail law was discriminatory, requiring reforms, Paulin noted.

"You don't want to go back to that," she said. "I am open-minded to adjusting the current bail law."

Paulin, who authored most New York State gun control laws, said removing guns from the streets has been imperative. Regarding the new concealed gun carry law being challenged in court, Paulin said, "I don't want someone sitting next to me in synagogue who has a gun. I hope we can adjust to what the courts say in a way people still feel protected."

"We need to focus on illegal gun owners

continued on page 9

Shimsky Looking to Make Jump From Board of Legislators to Assembly

By Martin Wilbur

Change doesn't happen often in the Assembly district that includes Greenburgh and Mount Pleasant. The late Richard Brodsky served 28 years and the current incumbent, Tom Abinanti, has spent the last 12 years representing that territory.

But change will happen this year in the 92nd Assembly District after County Legislator MaryJane Shimsky (D-Dobbs Ferry) defeated Abinanti in the Democratic primary in June.

Shimsky is being challenged next week by Republican Carlo Valente of Hawthorne, an assistant building inspector in the Town of Eastchester. The district, which now includes a small piece of northwest Yonkers, is heavily weighted toward Democrats, giving Shimsky an major advantage. (President Biden won the district by 37 points in 2020.) But Shimsky is not taking anything for granted.

"The Republicans are making arguments out there and we have to counter those arguments and they're all counterable," said Shimsky, who is in her sixth and final term on the Board of Legislators. "But we have to make sure our people know what the story is with all of these and the importance of coming out to vote."

Valente jumped into the race because of what he described as a culmination of government taking away too many liberties and too many citizens acquiescing. It reached intolerable levels during the pandemic with masking and vaccine mandates and the government telling residents where they could and could not go,



Carlo Valente

he said.

He has also been involved as a parent in the Mount Pleasant School District, and too many mandates have filtered down to the schools as well, said Valente, who served in the Marines after spending much of his childhood in Yonkers.

"When I was 18 years old, I enlisted in the Marines because I wanted to say thank you (to the nation) for taking my parents straight off the boat from Italy," Valente, a volunteer firefighter, said. "I said this is what I can do for this country, and thank you for giving my parents a better life."

With the spiraling cost of living, Valente wants to help families today realize a better life.



MaryJane Shimsky

The state is spending billions on sweetheart deals and projects it and its residents can't afford, he said.

"Why are we paying for a billion-dollar stadium up in Buffalo? Of course, I'm for clean air and water, but we're going to spend \$4.2 billion on something?" Valente said of the Environmental Bond Act. "Is it going to be spent appropriately? Is there going to be any kind of follow-through?"

Shimsky said the cost of housing is one of the biggest problems facing Westchester and the state. She would like to work on proposals that encourage the construction of affordable and more moderately priced housing, since so much of local construction

has been for higher-end units.

Furthermore, too many tenants face out-of-control rents because they don't have protections.

"We can't continue this way, and if that means putting more regulation on landlords to control what they can charge, we're going to have to do it," Shimsky said.

Shimsky said while there are areas of the state where crime is on the rise, that is not the case in Westchester. Where there is higher crime, much of it has to do with too many illegal guns being smuggled into New York, she said.

Although there needed to be revisions to bail reform, Shimsky said the spike in crime has little, if anything, to do with reform, since there are other areas of the country where crime has spiked without those measures.

Valente chided Shimsky for referring to bail reform as a mixed bag. He said there has been a high rate of arrest among those charged with felonies, laying the blame at the feet of Gov. Kathy Hochul and the Democrats.

Allowing people to have guns is necessary so criminals might think twice about committing offenses, Valente said. When offenders know they have easy targets, that's when more crime occurs, he said.

"It puts the criminal and the victim on an even plateau," Valente said of encouraging gun ownership for those who want to exercise that right.

Valente agrees with safe storage laws,

continued on page 9

White Plains Challenger Takes on Burdick in 93rd Assembly District Bid

By Abby Luby

Assemblyman Chris Burdick (D-Bedford) is running for a second term representing the 93rd Assembly District that includes the towns of Bedford, Harrison, Lewisboro, Mount Kisco, New Castle, North Castle, North Salem, Pound Ridge and part of White Plains.

A longtime Bedford resident, Burdick had been the town's first Democratic supervisor in 30 years. Challenging Burdick for the seat is Republican Gary Lipson, a military veteran, former IBM employee and lawyer from White Plains.

Burdick said the current \$220 billion state budget is fiscally strong.

"We forecasted conservatively and the budget includes tax cuts for the middle class earning between \$27,000 and \$323,000, bringing taxes down to the lowest they have been in 70 years," Burdick said.

Lipson is concerned the budget will create a deficit of more than \$6 billion in five years.

"If they don't adjust the budget, the taxpayer will have to make up the difference," Lipson said. "New Yorkers can't figure out where the money is being spent. Republicans were locked out of the budget discussion. We need transparency and accountability."

Lipson favors the \$4.2 billion New York Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act, which is on the ballot, but worries how it will be repaid.

"The budget expenditures, the interest and principal will impact voters 30 years



Assemblyman Chris Burdick

from now when the bond becomes due," he said. "Somebody is going to have to pay."

Burdick said the bond is needed to address critically essential infrastructure projects that includes drinking water and wastewater.

"These costs would be crushing if paid for by local property taxes but (the bond) will provide significant relief," Burdick said. "The cost will be quite manageable over the bond's 30-year life."

The state's five-year, \$25 billion plan to create 100,000 affordable housing units is a start but not sufficient, Burdick said.

"Creating affordable housing is always a challenge," he said. "It involves land issues, sewers, septic, municipal water



Gary Lipson

access. We need to partner with the county, responsible private sector developers and offer incentives to build low- to moderate-income housing."

Lipson said New York needs to be less hostile to businesses who could offer good paying jobs and make housing affordable.

"New York is the most expensive place to live in this country," Lipson said.

"Affordable housing can be accomplished by a collaboration between industry and government. If you don't welcome new businesses, you're squeezing out the middle class."

Despite two revisions, the state's bail law needs additional modification, according to

Burdick.

"We have two justice systems. One for those who can afford bail and another for those who can't," Burdick said. "Overwhelmingly, those who can't afford bail are people of color and they could unfairly wait in jail for months until their trial."

Often there is misleading information about the law, he said.

"The crime rate has nothing to do with bail reform," Burdick said. "Westchester County has a declining crime rate, but we need to address common-sense gun safety legislation to help bring down crime."

"The cashless bail law was ill-conceived," Lipson said. "A criminal who has been arrested six times for violent crimes has no business being back on the street. We need to review district attorney records to see if DAs are reducing the severity of the crime and releasing criminals."

Lipson said he doesn't oppose women getting abortions for free in New York.

"I'm not excited that New York taxpayers are paying for that service," he said. "I believe abortion should be safe, legal and rare. My focus is on contraception education and promoting adoption."

Burdick recently sponsored the Freedom from Interference with Reproductive and Endocrine Health Advocacy and Travel Exercise (FIRE HATE) Act to protect out-of-state women coming to New York for an abortion.

Reviewing school funding is imperative, said Lipson.

continued on next page

Slater, Valletta Set Sights on 94th Assembly District Seat

By Rick Pezzullo

The race for the 94th Assembly District seat pits Yorktown Supervisor Matt Slater against Carmel resident and first-time candidate Kathleen Valletta. They are running Nov. 8 to succeed Kevin Byrne, who is running unopposed for Putnam County Executive to replace MaryEllen Odell. Odell is term limited.

Slater, who was re-elected without opposition to a second two-year term last November in Yorktown, has Republican and Conservative backing, while Valletta, a Putnam County attorney, will appear on the Democratic line.

New York's 94th Assembly District encompasses Yorktown and Somers in Westchester and Carmel, Southeast, Patterson and Putnam Valley in Putnam.

"It's not a small decision. It took a lot of conversations with my family," Slater said discussing the process that led to him throwing his hat in the ring to move up the political ranks. "My wife wasn't on board at first. At the end of the day, we recognized we have a responsibility. I think we have done a great job, but there are bigger problems, and we need leaders to step up and tackle those problems."

"I felt I could offer something different and more perhaps," Valletta said. "I'm a hands-on person. It's what I do. It's how I know how to be. I enjoy helping people."

Slater



Supervisor Matt Slater

A graduate of Yorktown High School, Slater is no stranger to Albany. He worked for three years for the Assembly's minority leader, two years as chief of staff for former assemblyman Steve Katz and four years as chief of staff for former senator Terrence Murphy.

Slater said he was first inspired to be a public servant when he visited Washington D.C. with his mom as an eight-year-old and President Bill Clinton's motorcade drove by as he was standing outside the Capitol.

"Ever since then I've always had this passion for public service," he said. "(In Albany) I understand the issues and I understand the process. I don't think I will



Kathleen Valletta

need any training wheels. I'm willing to work with anybody. I think it's all about how you approach it. It's an exciting opportunity. I have the experience to fight for our community."

Slater cited affordability, inflation and public safety as some of the key issues residents are most concerned about in the district.

"People are really struggling and they are scared," he said. "If you compare Yorktown's taxes to financing with the state it's night and day. New York State does not have a cash problem, it has a spending problem. It's about respecting taxpayers. The easy thing to do is raise taxes. You have an obligation as an elected official to fight like hell to

keep taxes down."

Addressing crime, Slater remarked cashless bail was "an utter failure."

"It's just not working. What they have done is put people in jeopardy," he said. "When you are a repeat offender, there's got to be some consequences."

Valletta

For the last 35 years, Valletta has owned and maintained a private law practice that serves clients throughout Dutchess, Putnam, and Westchester counties. She serves on the board of directors for several nonprofit organizations and is serving her second term as president of Carmel Rotary. She regularly delivers food to the local pantries, and she cooks at the Brewster soup kitchen.

Among other volunteer organizations, Valletta has served several years on the Putnam/Northern Westchester Women's Resource Center Board and is an officer for the Putnam County Bar Association and the Putnam County Legal Aid Society. As a member of the board of directors for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, she instituted the first bone marrow drive in Putnam County.

"I have helped to successfully bring change and peace to people's lives," she said. "Putnam County needs a loudmouth who is on top of this stuff. Yeah, I'm the underdog. I hope to make a respectable showing. I hope to win, because I should."

Valletta said New York's high taxes have

continued on next page

Levenberg, Halper in Race to Succeed Galef in Assembly

By Rick Pezzullo

Assemblywoman Sandy Galef served the 95th Assembly District for 30 years before deciding last winter to retire. Hoping to follow in her formidable footsteps is her former chief of staff, Ossining Town Supervisor Dana Levenberg, and a political newcomer and retired teacher, Stacy Halper of Briarcliff Manor.

The 95th Assembly District includes Cortlandt, Peekskill, Ossining and parts of Yorktown, Briarcliff Manor and Putnam County. The salary for the seat, which is up for grabs every two years, is \$110,000.

"Voters who want a representative with the experience, knowledge and skills to hit the ground running on Day One and deliver results should choose me," Levenberg said. "People who know well what it takes to be successful in this role, including the current assemblywoman, Sandy Galef, have endorsed me for this reason."

"I am running to give people a real voice in their government. Sandy Galef has occupied this seat for 30 years, admirably. However, I believe people want a change," Halper said. "This is a climate where Republicans stand an excellent chance of gaining seats and thereby giving many people a voice in their government. This will be the year. Yes, I will win for the people."

Levenberg

Levenberg is currently serving her seventh year as town supervisor following nine years on the Ossining Board of Education. For eight years she worked as Galef's chief of staff. She secured the Democratic line earlier this year by easily prevailing in a primary.

She said because the district is largely composed of river towns, combating climate change and "promoting environmental



Supervisor Dana Levenberg

resiliency" must be a top priority for the next elected representative.

"Our next legislator needs to be able to understand the issues and potential solutions, and be able to work productively with other legislators to achieve results," she said. "I am best positioned to deliver results in this regard."

Levenberg said she is "on a mission" to build healthy and equitable communities environmentally, economically, physically and mentally.

"I'm working for clean air, clean water and green jobs, to bring us into a future where we are no longer dependent on fossil fuels that imperil our planet and our security," she said. "I want an economic recovery that extends to everyone, not just the ultra-rich. I want to pass sensible gun reforms that are proven to reduce gun violence. I want



Stacy Halper

to make sure that women keep the right to control their own bodies."

Levenberg compared the election to a gear shift in a car. Choosing Republicans would amount to going in reverse, while picking Democrats would be moving forward.

"Today's Republican Party has been taken over by an extreme right-wing faction, the MAGA movement, that wants to turn back the clock to a time where women, the LGBTQ community and people of color had fewer rights," she remarked. "While my fellow Democrats and I are hard at work on real plans to solve big problems and to protect our rights which we have relied on for the last half-century, our opponents are using conspiracy theories, misinformation, voter suppression and scare tactics to push through unpopular policies that benefit very few people."

Halper

Halper was raised in Brooklyn and has lived in Briarcliff Manor for nearly 30 years. She pursued her dream of being a musician for many years before landing a job at Random House, where she became marketing manager. After raising her children, she worked as a New York City music teacher in the South Bronx for 10 years.

She said she's running to "give people a real voice in their government."

"I'm not a career politician. I was out in the real world and understand what the typical working person goes through," Halper said. "I've also learned the most important things: how to see a problem from both sides and how to achieve the best solutions," she stated. "I feel that there are many people in my district that disagree with state decisions like vaccine mandates, bail reform laws, CRT taught in their schools and unconstitutional Second Amendment laws. The legislature, for whatever reason, is ignoring the wants and needs of their constituency."

Other problems that Halper identifies are poor roads, unreasonable mandates that are threatening businesses and excessive taxes. Parents are also losing control over what their children are being taught in school, she said.

Halper, who is running on the Republican and Conservative lines, took her own swipe at the Democratic Party.

"This is not the Democratic Party of 30 years ago," she said. "The new Democrats are very far left and do not speak to the everyday working people. Corruption in the Democrat Party is astounding. I am a mother, educator and concerned citizen. The New York State that I grew up in is unrecognizable, but I refuse to give up. I need to win this seat for the future of our children."

White Plains Challenger Takes on Burdick in 93rd Assembly District Bid —

continued from previous page

"The average cost of education in New York State is over \$20,000 per student — twice the national average," he said. "I would commission experts to study where things are failing at the state level."

Holding down school taxes and getting more state aid for education is an important issue for Burdick.

"Although the communities in the 93rd Assembly District get significant benefits from state aid, the current foundation aid formula may need some adjustment. But the schools in my district provide superb education," Burdick said.

Lipson said the Democratic majority in both chambers represents a flawed system.

"The one-party rule is just not working and the legislature is essentially a rubber stamp. There's been rising crime and inflation, taxes are out of control and political corruption has gotten worse. We can change that by voting the major political party out of office."

"We need to work across the political spectrum to get things done," Burdick said. "So many issues are neither Democratic or Republican."

Slater, Valletta Set Sights on 94th Assembly District Seat —

continued from previous page

been forcing too many people to relocate.

"You'll hear politicians say they will lower taxes. It's about making taxes fair," she said. "It's about fairness across the income groups. People have to want to stay here."

Valletta said Putnam County is one of the safest places in the state and maintained there is no data to support the fear-mongering from

Republicans.

"Violent felons are not getting out on bail," she said. "They cite the most extreme examples. How about sensible gun restrictions? There's like three guns for every resident in Putnam. It's insane. We are 20 miles away from Sandy Hook. We are always talking about cashless bail, but we're not talking about gun control."

Political Newcomer Makes Assembly Run Against Paulin —

continued from page 7

who are the criminals, not the legal gun owners who are safe and civic-minded people," Fix countered. "It should be up to a private institution or restaurant if they want their patrons carrying guns."

Fix strongly supports term limits for state representatives.

"It's good to have different people work in the government," he said. "Assembly seats should be four terms, or eight years."

Of his first political campaign, Fix said he liked walking door to door and meeting residents.

"I'm just an everyday citizen trying to break

Shimsky Looking to Make Jump From Board of Legislators to Assembly —

continued from page 7

enhanced training and education for gun owners.

Shimsky said the U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs decision which overturned Roe v. Wade required New York to pass legislation in June with greater protections for women's reproductive health freedom. She would like to strengthen penalties for those directly

into the political arena and be of service," Fix said. "I'd like to bring things back more towards the center and move our state and country ahead."

For Paulin, term limits would produce infective representation.

"The legislature is a cumbersome, complicated system," Paulin said. "Once you learn to navigate it you are much stronger. I am much better today and a far better advocate for the communities I represent."

interfering with the operation of a reproductive health clinic.

Valente agrees with the high court's decision to let each state's voting public make the decision about abortion issues.

"The citizens of that state control what we want to live under and what we want to live by," he said.

Hildenbrand, McCall Renew Some of Last Year's Debate in New Castle

By Martin Wilbur

Last year's New Castle Town Board elections turned out to be a referendum on the merits and demerits of the controversial Form Based Code that would have altered the zoning in the heart of downtown Chappaqua.

While that proposal has been apparently relegated to history, the tension that flowed in torrents last fall, still runs deep between Unite New Castle and its supporters and the town's Democratic Committee. Over the past month a one-seat special Town Board election next week has renewed some of last year's animosities.

Councilman Christian Hildenbrand, who was appointed in January two months after United New Castle's four-seat sweep last November, faces the 2021 defeated Democratic supervisor nominee Holly McCall. The winner will serve the remaining three years of what would have been Andrea Sanseverino Galan's Town Board term. She announced during the 2021 general election campaign she would be moving from New Castle.

After his appointment, Hildenbrand said he wasn't certain whether he would run for the balance of the term, but figured if he enjoyed the work and could help the town it would only be fair to the ticket's supporters to compete for the three remaining years.

"I was sort of getting my feet under me and making sure that I felt like this is something I wanted to continue," Hildenbrand said.

McCall, who had served a term on the Chappaqua Board of Education before

running, said she wanted to continue her public service and wasn't deterred by last year's defeat.

"I have something to offer the community, especially now as there is a very single-minded majority (on the Town Board)," McCall said. "Having more diversity of thought and perspective and evenness on the board is important."

What hasn't changed during the past year are the different approaches for downtown Chappaqua. Hildenbrand said he favors measured and incremental improvements rather than radically changing its character. That decision has already paid dividends with several new restaurants and businesses having moved in this year, refreshing the downtown, he said.

"The fact that they're taking that chance in our town, to me is just the greatest statement of all that the town never was dead, never was dying," Hildenbrand said of the new merchants.

Other steps for the town to consider is hosting more events with the Recreation Department and music, which will increase foot traffic at certain times of year, he said.

But McCall said most of the changes during the past year have been "one-offs," with no articulated goals for the future. She would favor bringing the community together – not necessarily formal charrettes since that would be for public land – but forums that help shape the future direction of the town.

"We have spent a lot of time and money as a community, as a town on master plans," she said. "Despite the fact that the Form Based



Holly McCall



Councilman Christian Hildenbrand

Code is dead, there was a useful bit of learning that happened, about what people don't want, in particular. So I think we need to finish the conversation."

For North Greeley Avenue, which needs the most help, McCall said, she would work toward reaching consensus on a type of policy or zoning to set that stretch up for success rather than reacting to each proposal in isolation.

The preliminary mixed-use proposal for the old Rite Aid property, should be returning to the town, Hildenbrand said. He called it an intriguing proposal that would provide a

different type of housing for a property that needs to be improved.

Hildenbrand said he wouldn't object having some select underutilized parcels in town discussed for development as long as they provide benefits such as additional housing, community space and restaurants and retail.

Millwood must also be a greater focus on the town's radar, McCall said. Completing the sidewalk project for the hamlet's center is important while the town should continue exploring funding for sewers.

She would like the town to look at its *continued on next page*

Mayes, Smith Vie for Unexpired Cortlandt Town Board Seat

By Rick Pezzullo

When voters head to the polls on Nov. 8, lost in the shuffle of some of the high-profile state and congressional contests may be a local race in the Town of Cortlandt where Councilman Robert Mayes and Verplanck native Warren Smith are vying for a one-year term on the Town Board.

Mayes, a fifth-generation town resident, was appointed in February to fill an empty seat created when Supervisor Dr. Richard Becker succeeded retiring Linda Puglisi. Smith, who ran unsuccessfully a year ago in his first attempt at elected office in Cortlandt, was one of 15 candidates who threw his hat in the ring to be appointed to the vacancy on the all-Democratic board.

The winner of the Nov. 8 election will serve the final year of Becker's unexpired four-year council term. The seat will be up for grabs again next November.

"I love this town and I want to keep it as a great town to raise a family in," Mayes said. "I think we have a great team here in Cortlandt. I find it a great environment to work in."

"You have to really want to do this. I really want to do this," Smith said. "We need a balance. It would be better if we got a different voice in there to shape our policy."

Mayes

Mayes, 42, an attorney working at the New York State Department of Corrections and a former Westchester County assistant



Warren Smith

district attorney, served nearly two terms on the Lakeland Board of Education before joining town government.

A resident in the Crompond section of Cortlandt, he has been involved with several civic organizations, including as a coach for Cortlandt American Little League, a Cub Scout leader, a board member of the Mt. Pleasant Blythedale Foundation and a member of the Westchester Black Bar Association.

In his eight months on the Town Board, Mayes said he has taken a special interest in the town's Recreation Department and was proud of the town preserving more



Robert Mayes

than 30 acres of open space in the northern end.

He mentioned fiscal responsibility, infrastructure improvements and technology advances as three areas he plans to focus on if he is victorious. He also dismissed the notion that a board dominated by one party was undesirable.

"I have always been a big believer that local government transcends politics," he said. "I don't necessarily think there is a Democratic or Republican way to do it. I'm raising my young family here. Cortlandt is focused on being that kind of community. Cortlandt has been my home and hopefully

will always be my home."

Commenting on the development proposed in the Medical Oriented District (MOD), Mayes said he was keeping an open mind and listening to all stakeholders, although he feels an assisted living facility would be beneficial.

As for the quarry site in Verplanck, Mayes said he believes the indoor soccer facility "could absolutely work."

"I would like to see that area developed," Mayes said. "I see it not as a regional attraction, but as a local attraction."

Smith

Smith, 59, was born and raised in Verplanck and is a 1981 Hendrick Hudson High School graduate. President of the Verplanck Residents Association and a longtime Boy Scouts leader, he is director of operations for a commercial printer in New York City.

He was involved in the effort to stop the Port Cortlandt industrial project and has been a regular attendee at town meetings in recent years.

"I got bit by the bug," Smith said of his interest in being an elected official. "I have a hard time saying no to people if they need help. This one party doesn't make good governance. You don't get all different points of view. Right now, it's all one-sided. It's not that as one voice I'm going to move the needle, but I want to give them a different perspective."

"I am not, nor will I ever become, an *continued on next page*

Fleming, Ellner Compete for Albano's Putnam Legislature Seat

By Rick Pezzullo

Putnam County Legislator Carl Albano is vacating his District 5 seat after 12 years, opening the door for a new member on the nine-member board that currently has only one Democrat.

Vying for the position is former Kent Supervisor Maureen Fleming, who is running on the Democratic and Tax Watch Party lines, and Carmel resident and businessman Greg Ellner, who will appear on the Republican and Conservative lines.

Fleming ended her eight-year run in Kent last year when she was term limited.

"I decided to enter this race because the residents of this county deserve a legislator who will work for them and be responsive to their needs," Fleming said. "A lot of people running for office make promises and when they get into office, they do whatever they please. As town supervisor of Kent, I kept my promises and intend to do the same as legislator."

Ellner, who lost a close race when he ran for Carmel Town Board in 2009 in his only prior bid for elected office, is looking to bring a private sector approach to government.

"I'm not a politician. My opponent is a professional politician," Ellner said. "I'm running on a positive note. What you see is what you get. We have to do better than what we're doing. When you get elected you shouldn't be voting party, you should be voting your conscience. You do what you feel is right."

Fleming

Fleming, an attorney and former teacher, has conceded she may be facing "a bit of an uphill battle" with registered Republicans far outpacing Democrats in the county and 70 percent of district voters living in Carmel. However, she believes the GOP-heavy legislature has limited discussions that "led to rancor and a lack of civility."

But Fleming said what separates Republicans and Democrats on a national level narrow in local government.

"We need people on the legislature who



Maureen Fleming

are more interested in serving the people rather than a political party," Fleming said. "For eight years as town supervisor in Kent, I worked with four board members who were members of a different party, and we got things done. I want to do the same in the legislature."

Greater transparency in county government is critical, she said.

"We need to answer to the public, not our own personal agendas," Fleming said.

If elected, her main priority would be to "put a lid on the out-of-control spending in this county and to fix the budget."

"Taxes and uncontrolled spending are the issues driving people out of Putnam County," Fleming said. "It is possible to cut fat from the budget without cutting services and improvements. We proved that in Kent during my eight years in office with 0 percent town tax increases and improvements in infrastructure, equipment, services and programs. I love living here and I want to



Greg Ellner

be able to afford to live here."

Fleming maintained county officials should be striving to freeze and lower taxes.

"We have to vote no on the hidden salary increases for cronies in the form of contingency funds and end the practice of creating jobs for staff members of the current administration while members of the community struggle to find work," she said.

"We need to stop offering premier healthcare at a small fraction of the cost to part-time legislators. We have to stop throwing our money at pet projects like the Tilly Foster Farm and the Putnam County Golf Course and start directing those funds toward helping the residents of this county stay in this county."

Ellner

Ellner is an executive with a company that specializes in water and wastewater disinfection. He grew up in lower Westchester and has lived in Carmel for 20

years. With his twins now 12 years old, he decided it was time where "I could really make a difference."

"You have to reach across the aisle. If it's a good idea, you have to do what is right," he said. "People need to be heard. It's about common sense. You can't look back. You have to move forward."

Ellner said he is "cautiously optimistic" despite being in the majority party, noting the roughly 1,500 independent voters could make the difference on Election Day.

"They need to see the contrast between my skillset and her skillset," Ellner said. "We have local issues and we have national issues. Often people focus on national issues. It's the individual, not the party. It's individual viewpoints. There's a huge difference between government and private industry. A lawyer's skillset is to advocate. Businesspeople get things done and find solutions."

Ellner said the number one issue in Putnam is affordability.

"It has to be," he said. "It's a huge issue. We have to get better at what we're doing. A way to minimize that is to be more efficient. We have to learn how to function better and do more with less."

Another issue on the minds of residents is crime, which Ellner blames, in part, on the state's cashless bail law. He said an 80-year-old woman was recently robbed walking to her car at a supermarket in Brewster and a car was stolen in his neighborhood.

"There are (criminals) here because if you get caught, you're out in an hour or two," Ellner said. "The pendulum swung to the extreme. We have to fix it. I feel you have to restore deterrents."

Ellner said he has the knowledge and expertise to tackle infrastructure issues, such as sewers and water, that are significant in some parts of the county.

He also vowed to be accessible to his constituents, saying he will host monthly coffee chats at local establishments.

"County legislators have to be accessible. I'm available. I'm accessible," Ellner said. "People need to be heard."

Hildenbrand, McCall Renew Some of Last Year's Debate in New Castle

continued from previous page

parking in downtown Chappaqua because the shift in commuting patterns has left the train station parking lot underutilized.

Both candidates would work toward more walkability for New Castle. At \$10 million, the proposed ChapLine linking the area near Chappaqua Crossing with downtown is expensive. Therefore, Hildenbrand said the town should also work with the Recreation Department to maintain and enhance trails. He also supports exploring the connection of Millwood and Gedney Park with sidewalks.

McCall said given the ChapLine's expense, it might be more beneficial to look at other

sidewalk projects if significant grants cannot be obtained. She would also like to explore other recreation opportunities including more basketball facilities for children and possibilities for a town pool.

"I think there's a way that we could explore bringing the community together now and become inclusive," McCall said of a pool.

Hildenbrand said the town must stay on top of the county's ongoing airport Master Plan process and how it would affect the town. The board has also done a good job at filling advisory board vacancies.

"I think tapping that reservoir of resident expertise and engagement will continue to be a focus," Hildenbrand said.

Mayes, Smith Vie for Unexpired Cortlandt Town Board Seat

continued from previous page

average career politician. I am simply a lifelong member of our beautiful community and care deeply about it and my fellow citizens. I believe it is time to put into practice the values and the strategies that I have taught all these years."

Smith said town officials "should have been frank from the get-go" about their preferences for the MOD, noting the town needs "wise development."

"I believe something should be there, but you can't do everything," he said. "I'm not against development, but you need to take into account the neighbors around it.

If it's scaled correctly and mitigation is done for traffic, it could be a good fit."

A member of the town's Quarry Committee, Smith said whatever is built on the quarry property in Verplanck "could be an anchor or engine to build more business."

"It's something special. It's a magical place that could be a really good draw," Smith said of the 100-acre site. "Some of the proposals are more on target than others. The soccer project is still in play. I hope that will still happen. We have to figure out something to do with that quarry."



