

Saugerties Cons, GOP team up against “radical left-wing” agenda



Conservative candidates Angie Minew (Legislature, District II), Allyson Barbaria (Town Board), Gaetana Ciarlante (town supervisor), Mary Wawro (Legislature, District I), Doug Myer (highway superintendent) and Joe Roberti Jr. (Town Board); inset, Conservative Chairman George Heidcamp (photo by Will Dendis)

Two years ago, there were no more bitter enemies in Saugerties politics than Republican Chairman Joe Roberti Jr. and Conservative Chairman George Heidcamp. Each backed a different candidate for town supervisor and while the two camps attacked one another, Democrat-endorsed Independence Party member Greg Helsmoortel cruised to victory.

The Conservative Caucus, held June 11, showed they don't plan on a repeat this year.

Attendees were treated to the sight of Heidcamp and Roberti shaking hands and praising one another. Strange bedfellows indeed. Heidcamp explained the need for the alliance to his party.

“There's a new sheriff in town,” he said. “His name is Lanny Walter and he's a radical left-wing liberal.”

He was talking about the chair of the town's Democratic Party who took over for Mike Harkavy at the beginning of the year. Conservatives talk about Harkavy as a pragmatist; someone you could work with. Walter, they say, is an ideologue. Heidcamp said if the Conservatives and Republicans didn't align, the town would move dramatically leftward; a true doomsday scenario for the party faithful.

The caucus itself was a tame affair. A committee of party members had previously met with candidates

seeking the nomination and made its recommendations. There was only one contested vote. Conservative attendee Fred Costello Sr. nominated his son, incumbent Councilman Fred Costello Jr., for a Town Board slot. A dispute ensued between Costello Sr. and Heidcamp over a pledge candidates were asked to sign. Costello Sr. said his son was right to refuse to sign the new pledge, which asks anyone seeking the nomination if they would uphold Conservative principles and keep in touch with the party if elected. “He was being a man,” by not signing such a document, said Costello Sr., who said no other party asks candidates to make written pledges in exchange for nominations. Heidcamp said the pledges were simply designed to ensure candidates were not seeking the party line just to have an additional line, which he said some had done in the past. After getting the nod, the party wouldn’t hear from them until the next election.

Barbaria won 37-7.

Other picks:

Supervisor: Gaetana Ciarlante;

Town Board: Joe Roberti Jr. and Allyson Barbaria;

Highway Superintendent: Doug Myer (*incumbent*).

For County Legislature, there was no vote, as the ballot will be decided by a yet-to-be scheduled primary. The following candidates were suggested:

District I: Mary Wawro (*incumbent*);

District II: Angie Minew;

District III: Dean Fabiano (*incumbent*).

In nominating Ciarlante, Mark Knaust called her “instinctually Conservative.” Indeed, of the candidates, she is the only one enrolled in the party. (She’s actually vice chair.) Everyone else but Myer is a Republican, and he used to be.

Ciarlante herself is a former Republican who was very active in the party. After barely missing the GOP nod for supervisor against incumbent Kelly Myers at that party’s 2013 caucus, she went on to the Conservative Caucus and won. At the time, Heidcamp, who had been feuding with Myers for months, said he wouldn’t make the mistake of holding his party’s caucus after the GOP caucus in 2015. He didn’t, though if the alliance holds up, it won’t matter. Roberti Jr. has promised to help Ciarlante at this year’s GOP caucus, which hasn’t been scheduled yet. But against whom? Greg Helmoortel? Kelly Myers?

Stay tuned.

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