

OPINION

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ANOTHER VIEW



SHAWN VARGO | FROM THE EDITOR

Maio, Muccini need to follow rules

I may be new to my current title - but I'm not new to small town politics.

At Tuesday's first Corning City Council meeting of 2017, The Leader was all set to report on which candidate would be voted in by the council to represent Ward 2 through the calendar year - Michele Beckman or Kate Paterson.

Corning's City Charter was quite clear on the issue. In the case of a tie vote in November, all vacancies for elective offices shall be filled by appointment of the City Council. The appointed candidate would then fill the vacancy. An election would be held in November - with the winner completing the full term on the council.

It should have been an easy task for the council. It fulfilled this task in April, when it selected Beckman over Paterson by a 5-3 vote to fill the seat left vacant by Lee Welles' resignation in March.

When Beckman and Paterson vied for the position in November - the result was a 273-273 tie in the general election - setting up the replay on Tuesday.



SHAWN VARGO

In an M. Night Shyamalan-like twist, however - Councilmen Steven Maio from the First Ward and Frank Muccini of the Fifth Ward chose to sit the vote out by abstaining.

Regardless of any argument stating that Ward 2 residents should be the ones selecting their representative, Maio and Muccini are in the wrong on this issue.

The residents did vote - in November. It was a tie. It is up to the City Council to break that tie and select a representative until the next election in November.

Those are the rules, gentlemen. You need to play by them.

— Shawn Vargo is the Executive Editor and can be reached at svargo@the-leader.com. Follow on Twitter @TheLeaderVargo.

TOM O'MARA | 58TH DISTRICT

Snapshots of public opinion

The Southern Tier and the Finger Lakes regions may not be direct stops on Governor Andrew Cuomo's 2017 State of the State road tour this week, but those of us living, working and raising families here don't need a speech to know where things stand.

We know taxes are still too high and that there are still too many state mandates and regulations. We know job creation continues to lag and that private-sector economic growth isn't up to speed. We know heroin, meth and other deadly drugs are ravaging too many communities and taking too many young lives.

We also know that there are solid teams in place - at every level of government, through our Regional Economic Development Councils, within a number of vital public-private partnerships, at our not-for-profit organizations, and in many other places - committed to building the blueprints and foundations needed to address the challenges and crises facing us.

The 2017 session of the State Legislature kicked off last week and the Senate quickly started setting the stage by releasing a new report and issuing

recommendations based upon legislative hearings I co-sponsored last year as chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee.

The executive summary of our new report, "Water Quality and Contamination," states the overriding purpose this way, "In response to a burgeoning water quality crisis across New York State, the Senate and Assembly Health and Environmental Conservation Committees convened public hearings during the fall of 2016. The goal of these hearings was to provide an opportunity for legislators and the public to hear from state officials, experts, residents and others to gain an understanding of the problems as well as oversight responsibilities at the local, state and federal level with respect to water quality and contamination. These hearings provided a foundation upon which to begin building a framework for legislation and policies to ensure more appropriate responses to current and future water contamination occurrences."

We know that the many challenges surrounding water quality are here to stay. Consequently,

our legislative recommendations call for the establishment of a Drinking Water Quality Institute to maintain an independent focus on this issue. A new law I co-sponsored in 2016 to enact the first-in-the-nation requirement for public schools to test drinking water systems for lead contamination is already having a positive impact. So is the "Water Quality Infrastructure Improvement Act" the Senate spear-headed in 2015 to provide state grants to help local governments undertake long-overdue infrastructure upgrades.

Water quality highlights just one priority in 2017 and you can read our full report on my Senate website, <http://www.omara.nysenate.gov>.

A common question at the outset of every legislative session is this one: What's your opinion?

With that in mind, as I have annually since 2011, I've posted a "Community and Legislative Survey" on my website. The goal of this annual online questionnaire is to encourage input on a range of specific challenges facing the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions (as well as the state as a whole). This year's

survey will cover a range of specific topics - some that are hot button issues, and some that fly under the radar but are no less important - including unfunded state mandates, Medicaid reform, the heroin and opioid crisis, public corruption, local roads and bridges, and, of course, the economy and job creation.

The survey cannot cover every single issue on everyone's agenda, which is why it includes a section for anyone interested to provide additional comments and highlight their particular area of concern. It's not an end-all-be-all poll in any way, but it does help provide meaningful and useful snapshots of what's on the minds of area residents paying attention to state government and willing to give some thought to the choices being debated at the Capitol.

Every year I hear from thousands of area residents who take the time through an e-mail, a letter, a phone call, a community meeting or in some other way to share their ideas and, especially, their views on the issues of the day. The input - negative or positive, constructive or not - helps provide the insight and understanding that matters.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Council needs to give 2nd Ward a representative

To the Editor,
The City Council had an opportunity to show some leadership last Tuesday night by making a short term appointment to the vacant 2nd Ward seat until the election in November. Unfortunately, they could not work together and the people and the ward are left without any representation.
The City Council could have voted to select current Councilman Michele Beckman or her challenger Kate Paterson. Both candidates tied 273-273 in the fall election. The Council agreed both candidates would do a great job. Instead, the City Council failed to select either candidate.

At Tuesday night's Council meeting, Michele Beckman received four votes. Kate Paterson received two votes. Councilman Muccini and Maio abstained. They did not vote for either candidate. How Muccini and Maio felt

they did not have enough information to vote "yes" or "no" is puzzling.

They have both known the two candidates for nearly a year and praised their qualifications. It seems their votes were coordinated by Kate Paterson before the actual meeting to deny Michele Beckman the five votes she needed to hold office.

Rarely does a Councilman abstain on a vote. Never do I remember two members of the Council abstaining on the same issue.

It amazes me that the City Manager and department heads work together in a professional manner to benefit the taxpayers, but the Mayor can't get the Council to work cooperatively to pick a temporary councilman. I hope for the sake of the residents of the 2nd Ward that the Council will act quickly to select a candidate and provide the public with the representation they deserve.

Warren Blackwell
Former Alderman
Corning

Do not label our police

To the Editor
I take exception to the misinformation espoused by Darrin Robbins in Sunday's letter to the editor entitled "Police violence cannot be ignored".

There are currently over 800,000 law enforcement officers in the United States today. These officers serve in the federal, state, county and municipal level.

Mr. Robbins takes a few isolated incidents and labels our police as an invading army with a racist mentality. Mr. Robbins ignores the fact that many of the incidents captured on video were investigated by the outgoing Liberal justice department and most of the officers were exonerated of any wrong doing.

Mr. Robbins also cites the militarism of police beginning in the 1980's. Police have been a semi military organization since the inception of organized police departments founded over 200 years ago. The weaponry and tactics utilized by modern day police agencies are necessary to

contend with urban riots and the terrorism, crime and violence in America today.

I have spent my entire adult life in the law enforcement profession working in all levels and am currently certified as a police instructor by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, Bureau for Municipal Police. The training today's law enforcement officer receives is intensive and on-going. Contrary to what Mr. Robbins alludes to the curriculum does not include the persecution of minority groups. If any group has seen an increase in violence it's the law enforcement community with the highest number of law enforcement deaths in two decades.

I'm not sure if Mr. Robbins has any real world experience but his knowledge of the facts and of law enforcement, tactics, methods and training is non-existent. While no profession is perfect the overwhelming majority of the men and women who take the oath to protect and serve only wish to do so and return to their loved ones at the end of their tours.

Thomas P. Greven
Retired Police Association
Corning

First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

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