

6/27/2012

As election season begins, Smithfield parties field full slates

Two past Town Council presidents chasing Tassoni's vacant Senate seat

By **GERRY GOLDSTEIN**, Valley Breeze & Observer Correspondent

UPDATE: In a last-minute turnabout, Brent Barrows withdrew from the race despite party endorsement and Republicans replaced him on the ticket with Kellie-Ann Heenan, who ran unsuccessfully for School Committee two years ago. Barrows could not be reached immediately for comment, but party Chairman Philip Hirons said he cited personal reasons.

SMITHFIELD - The town's two major political parties held endorsement meetings this week, and the sessions produced a surprise: Multi-term Republican Town Councilman Richard Poirier will leave the council to challenge Democrat Stephen Archambault for the state Senate seat being vacated by Democrat John J. Tassoni Jr.

Republicans also announced that they are backing what could be the youngest duo ever to run together for School Committee, one of whom, 19-year-old Brent A. Barrows, was a high school senior just last year.

He'll partner with 25-year-old Sean Clough, also a Smithfield High School graduate, who has run unsuccessfully twice before, as the two oppose incumbent Democrat Joan LaFauci and ticket-mate Ronald Riley, a Providence police detective who lost a bid for Town Council two years ago.

Republicans are hoping at least to hold onto their 4-1 Town Council majority with a ticket that includes two incumbents, Ronald Manni and Maxine Cavanagh; Alberto LaGreca, a former council president whose School Committee term expires this year; and Rose Marie Cipriano, a member of the town's Financial Review Commission who was town meeting moderator in the 1980s when the now-appointive position was elective.

The GOP had not announced its fifth council candidate by press time, but said it would fill the slot.

The incumbent Republican council president, Michael J. Flynn, is not seeking a new term.

Democrats hope to wrest back control of the five-member council with a slate including sole incumbent Bernard Hawkins; former council and School Committee member Lauraine Ouellette; newcomer Suzy Alba, who works at Brown University and is studying for a master's degree in public administration; David M. Fanning, a Cumberland educator who ran unsuccessfully for council four years ago; and Lt. Patrick G. Reddy, a 25-year veteran on the Providence police force.

Republicans are endorsing David Bibeault, who twice ran unsuccessfully against Tassoni for Senate, to oppose state Rep. Thomas Winfield's bid for an 11th consecutive term in District 53.

No GOP opponent had been announced by press time for Democratic Rep. Peter Petrarca in District 44, but the

party was expected to file a name by the 4 p.m. deadline, June 27.

The Poirier-Archambault confrontation in Senate District 25 should be lively, with both carrying name recognition into battle.

Archambault is a former Town Council president who ran a spirited primary campaign for state attorney general in 2010 before being defeated by the eventual election winner, Peter Kilmartin.

Poirier, also a former Town Council president, said he has been thinking about seeking the Senate seat for some time, especially since in the recent redrawing of lines the district lost its portion of North Smithfield but picked up areas of his native Centredale in North Providence.

Tassoni announced earlier that he would not seek a seventh term in the Senate so he could concentrate on business interests and family.

Although all five Town Council seats are up for grabs, as those terms run concurrently for two years, just two of the five School Committee terms are expiring. School board terms are staggered and run for four years.

While Republicans dominate the Town Council, Democrats have a 3-2 edge on the school board. Not expiring for another two years are terms held by Democrat Virginia Harnois, the chairwoman; Democrat Brenden Oates - also a Smithfield High graduate; and Republican Richard Iannitelli, another product of the local school system.

Political newcomer Barrows is no stranger to committee proceedings - as a high school senior he was the student liaison to the board, sitting at its table and reporting on student issues. He's a part-time intern in the State Senate who attended Suffolk University for a year and plans to transfer to a yet-unchosen Rhode Island school to study political science.

Clough, who graduated from Smithfield high in 2005, has a degree in political science and economics.

Democrat LaFauci, a committee member since 2000, is a retired teacher who has been critical of the Town Council for what she says is insensitivity to the school district's financial needs.

The School Committee races are expected to attract more than the usual attention in November after a tumultuous year in which the board has been constantly parrying criticisms that it has made unwise financial decisions.

© 2012 Breeze Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved. | [Top of Page](#)



SAVE 20%
on all bouquets • same-day delivery available.

teleflora.
SHOP NOW >>

This ad is supporting your extension *PageRank*: [More info](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Hide on this page](#)