

# The Millbrook Independent

*A Journal of Politics and Opinion*

Vol 1, Number 1

Free

## Dems Run Candidates for Town Board

For the first time in recent memory, a team of Democrats have presented themselves as viable candidates for the Town Board. If they win, the Republican hegemony that goes back for at least a century would be ended.

The town supervisor contest is between Florence "Fussy" Prisco, the Republican incumbent, and Ed Shaughnessy, a newcomer to politics but a veteran in many other respects.

Republican incumbents Michael Murphy and Bob Audia are being challenged by Democrats Didi Barrett and Kate Farrell.

The Democrats have established an independent party Common Sense, as a name to rally supporters who may not wish to endorse a mainstream party. While Common Sense, the book written by Tom Paine in 1774 was a stimulus and apology for revolution, a revolution created the American Republic, replacing the abusive and repressive regime of the English monarchy. There is no suggestion that the Republican regime is abusive or repressive, but there may be a suggestion that change is good for a community that has had a single party in power for nearly a century.

### National Issues

The politics of small towns do not typically involve those issues that decide the trends at the national level, but it no doubt that the decline of the Republican Party at the state and municipal levels is related to the unpopularity of the Republicans in Washington. When the head of a party falls to 26% in the polls, the party too falls in popularity. So the reality is that Democrats have been presented with an unusual opportunity to win elections at all levels of government. As many Republicans themselves have noted, the drift of the party to the religious right created problems for moderates, centrists and those who have long held the belief that religion and politics should not be mixed. It remains to be seen whether the national trend will be reflected in this year's local elections.

### The New Democrats

The Town of Washington and the surrounding area has traditionally been a Republican stronghold. However, it is now represented in Washington by Kirsten Gillibrand, a Democrat from Hudson, who won in 2006 by a six percent margin over the Republican incumbent. Similarly, John Hall won a narrow victory over Republican incumbent Sue Kelly in the neighboring 19th Congressional District which covers Dover and southern Dutchess. Disaffection with the Republican leadership has trickled down. Democrats are energized and organized. For the first time in years they see a favorable trend.



The Democrat-Common Sense Candidates for Town Board Positions:

Kate Farrell, Ed Shaughnessy, and Didi Barrett

How are the Republicans going to deal with a war that won't end, a record deficit, an economy that seems wobbly at best, a pathetic record on the environment, a foreign policy that angers the rest of the world, a deafness as to global warming, an energy policy designed and run by the oil companies? It is going to be hard for Republicans to depart from their laissez faire roots. Can local Republicans come up with a local energy policy? Will Republican's traditional concerns with property rights and a free market prevent them from becoming activists in land conservation, in protecting farmland, in protecting the water resources, the forests and our wildlife? Governor Patacki was, in fact, a leader in all these areas. Will it be his legacy that local Republicans follow, or will they be caught up in the national agenda?

### The role of Independents

The Republican advantage in registrations may be balanced by the number of independent voters and voters who registered as belonging to "no party". In the Town of Washington, as of October 2006, there were 1098 registered Republicans, 708 Democrats, and 952 independents which number includes those choosing "no party". The election will, therefore, be about winning the votes of the independents voters. Good communications, access to the voters, personal visits and public appearances will be important for all the candidates.

County-wide, the Republican registration lead has dwindled to 4,021 or 3.9 percent, the narrowest margin in many years.

## EDITORIAL

### A new newspaper ?

We are motivated by the idea that a functioning democracy needs informed voters, and that a vibrant press is an essential part of the process.

We have been dismayed by the deterioration that is occurring in the print media, a general trend we have witnessed throughout the nation and in most of the world. New York City once had a dozen papers appearing at different times in the day. The number of papers have dwindled, and so has their size of their pages. The Millbrook Roundtable, once owned and edited by local families, is now part of a media conglomerate that stretches from Albany to southern Connecticut. We think the town important enough to merit a homegrown press, one sensitive to local issues.

We are offering these few pages to our readers and to those brave enough to run for political office. These individuals who are willing to sacrifice their private lives for public service deserve a fair hearing by an independent press.

We make no promises as to the long term, but we intend to run at least two issues before Election day and to bring our readers as much information as we and our staff can gather about the issues, the parties and the candidates.

Our government belongs to the people. The people deserve public servants that meet a high (but not impossible) standard. If voters go to the polls not knowing anything about those who are running, the people are handicapped.

The election process will not work unless the people vote. Voting is not just a right that exists in democracies, it is also an obligation of citizenship.