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## Environmental Advocate may Replace Businessman on APA Board

A local boat builder and environmental advocate could be replacing Lake Placid businessman Art Lussi on the Adirondack Park Agency Board of Commissioners in the near future if a gubernatorial appointment is upheld in the state Senate.

The Senate Environmental Conservation Committee tabled Governor David Paterson's appointment of Peter Hornbeck Tuesday to replace Lussi after local Adirondack governments expressed concern about Hornbeck's ties to environmental groups.

Although Lussi's term as one of five in-park commissioners expired last June, he has continued to serve as an APA Commissioner and local governments are blasting the Governor's choice and calling for Lussi's reappointment.

On Monday, the Essex County Board of Supervisors unanimously adopted a resolution to urge Paterson to reappoint Lussi to the seat.

Shortly after, Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages President Brian Towers and Adirondack Local Government Review Board Executive Director Fred Monroe drafted letters to state Senator Betty Little, imploring her to push for Lussi's reappointment.

"During his tenure on the APA board Mr. Lussi has demonstrated his ability to be an independent voice on the matters that affect the people of the park," Towers writes. "His understanding of the economic needs balanced with environmental concerns is beyond reproach."

For his part, Hornbeck's carbon-fiber canoes have become iconic in the region, and are often characterized by paddlers as some of the best on the market. But it isn't Hornbeck's business acumen that has local officials reeling.

"I believe that his past positions as a member of the board of directors and as Chairman of the Residents Committee to Protect the Adirondacks should raise concerns," Monroe writes.

There are currently three commissioners with past links to green groups and local officials have long argued that the APA's directing body is unbalanced.

APA Chairman Curt Stiles also holds in-park seats and is a former member of the Adirondack Council Board of Directors.

“One of the five current resident commissioners is a former Adirondack Council Director,” Monroe writes. “We believe that the four remaining resident commissioners should represent the views of the majority of the residents.”

The APA Board is also composed of three non-resident commissioners and three designees who represent the interests of the state.

But for Adirondack Council spokesman John Sheehan, Hornbeck’s experience in business, local government and environmental advocacy represents the definition of balance.

“What is the balance? People are complaining about folks having been associated with environmental groups that are their neighbors,” Sheehan said. “It’s up to governor to decide who of the park residents is qualified to serve on the park agency and I think he is likely to choose people who he has seen in action.”

Sheehan described Hornbeck as a calm and thoughtful advocate for business and the environment.

If it makes it out of Environmental Conservation, Hornbeck’s appointment must survive the state Senate Finance Committee before reaching the floor for approval from the full legislative body.

-Jon Alexander, 2-3-10