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Cuomo names Ulrich chairwoman of APA

Seated commissioner selected by governor to head agency

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RAY BROOK — Gov. Andrew Cuomo has chosen Leilani Ulrich, a seated commissioner, to lead the Adirondack Park Agency.

She was appointed to the APA in 2004 and again in 2008. She is chairwoman of the Regulatory Programs Committee.

Cuomo also appointed Wanakena resident Sherman Craig as a commissioner, to take the seat vacated when former Chairman Curt Stiles left in August.

"The Adirondack Park is one of this nation's greatest natural resources, and I am confident that it will thrive under Lani and Sherman's leadership," Cuomo said in a prepared statement Wednesday.

"Both Leilani and Sherman have dedicated their lives to the preservation and development of the park. They recognize the need to balance economic development within the Adirondacks with constant environmental protections. I look forward to working with them."

The appointment of Ulrich, who is from Old Forge, as commissioner does not have to be confirmed by the Senate.

It comes with a \$30,000 salary, according to state Sen. Betty Little (R-Queensbury), who said in an interview she is pleased with the new APA appointments.

"I applaud Gov. Cuomo on the appointments he is making. I've always believed the chairman should be an in-park position. Lani has shown real leadership skills on the APA Board. She's a good listener; she's really good at bringing people to the table and working with all sides of the issues. People have respected her thoughts.

"She's also the only in-park commissioner whose term is not expired."

FIRST WOMAN

Craig has an immediate temporary appointment, and confirmation will take place in January.

The procedure allowing an immediate appointment has been reviewed by Senate leaders, Little said.

Environmental protection advocates at the Adirondack Council lauded the choice of chair and the addition to APA's Board.

Council spokesman John Sheehan said Ulrich's involvement with Adirondack stakeholders in the Common Ground Alliance has built relationships on both sides of the traditional Adirondack land-use divide.

"She has a vision of the park that is shared by a lot of people (of) what the Adirondacks ought to look like, and she is not afraid to talk about it. She is also a good listener, and she's proven that at the Common Ground meetings."

Ulrich is the first woman to chair the state's core land-use regulatory agency for the Adirondack Park.

The official announcement came shortly after 1 p.m. Wednesday, drawing wide acclaim from many corners of the Adirondack land-use community.

Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward (R-Willsboro), long a proponent of home rule to uphold the interest of local economies, praised Cuomo's choices.

"I commend the governor for once again listening to the local residents and taking their thoughts into consideration before making his decision," she said in a statement.

"I am very pleased with his appointments, and I am looking forward to working closely with both Lani Ulrich and Sherman Craig on issues that are important to the North Country and those living in the Adirondack Park."

Neil Woodworth, executive director of the Adirondack Mountain Club, likewise welcomed the additions to the APA Board.

"ADK has worked with Lani Ulrich as part of the Adirondack Common Ground Alliance, where she strove for a balance between protection of the Adirondacks and sustainable economic development for its citizens and communities."

TOUGH DISCUSSIONS

Ulrich is well-known to parties on every side of the Adirondack land-use equation for leadership through tough discussions in Regulatory Programs Committee meetings that lead to full APA Board votes.

Craig is a newcomer to the APA review process.

Cuomo said the Wanakena resident is a retired teacher and school administrator, now running a rustic furniture business, Wanakena Woodworks.

Craig is the first APA commissioner to represent St. Lawrence County, Little said.

The governor described the APA newcomer as "an active outdoors traveler and volunteer," who works with several organizations, including the Clifton-Fine Economic Corp., Adirondack Mountain Club and the Waterfront Revitalization Project.

Craig is chairman of the 5 Ponds Partner Subcommittee and assisted in the opening the Alice Brook Snowmobile Trail and bridge.

GRASS-ROOTS START

Ulrich founded the Central Adirondack Partnership for the 21st Century, a regional non-profit community-development organization, starting with a grass-roots effort in 1997.

She also serves on the Central Adirondack Business Association Board of Directors, the Architectural Preservation Committee of the Webb Historical Association and the Adirondack Community Housing Trust Board and is a member of the New York state delegation to the Northern Forest Center's Sustainable Economies Initiative.