

Adirondack Daily Enterprise  
September 16, 2011

## Ulrich in line to chair APA?

Commissioner resolving shoreline violations on her property

By CHRIS KNIGHT - Senior Staff Writer

RAY BROOK - Support is reportedly building behind Lani Ulrich of Old Forge as the next chair of the state Adirondack Park Agency.

But she may have to resolve a pair of APA violations on her property if she wants the job.

The Glens Fall Post-Star reported Thursday that local government leaders and environmental groups in the Park are pushing Gov. Andrew Cuomo to nominate Ulrich, who's been an APA commissioner since 2004, to the position held by Curt Stiles until he resigned and left the agency last month. The newspaper described Ulrich as the "consensus candidate" of the two sides, which normally don't see eye to eye on many issues in the Park.

John Sheehan of the Adirondack Council, an environmental group, said he's heard that Ulrich's name had come up for consideration for the chair position. He said she's well qualified for the job, "has a level head, is even handed and will make good decisions.

"I think the name was one a lot of people had on their lists," Sheehan told the Enterprise. "We'll see if it's actually the person chosen by the governor. But I think that having more than one segment of the Adirondack population be in favor of you is pretty good in terms of helping your candidacy."

Fred Monroe, executive director of the Adirondack Park Local Government Review Board, told the Enterprise Thursday that he's heard Ulrich would be willing to accept the job if it is offered to her. But Monroe said he had no "inside information" that Cuomo was going to appoint Ulrich.

If she is picked, Monroe said he thinks Ulrich would have the support of his organization and the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages. He cited Ulrich's involvement with the Common Ground Alliance, which has been working to forge a dialogue between the different interests in the Park.

"I think she takes a balanced approach and she's always willing to listen to local government positions," he said. "I've personally been very impressed with the way she's facilitated those Common Ground meetings, and kept the conversation civil with a group of players where it could get out of hand very easily."

If Ulrich secures the appointment and her nomination clears the state Senate, she would be the first woman to chair the Park Agency board.

The news that she was being promoted as a candidate for the position came out the same day that APA staff acknowledged publicly that Ulrich and her husband are trying to resolve two violations of the agency's shoreline setback regulations on their property near Old Forge in the town of Webb.

Near the close of Thursday's monthly meeting in Ray Brook, John Burth of the agency's enforcement division said he was informing the agency board about the case in the interest of being "consistent with past practice when resolving violations involving agency board members."

Burth said the violations involve construction of a set of stairs along the shoreline of the Middle Branch of the Moose River, and the construction of a deck and stairway complex providing access to the shoreline. The structures were built, without the necessary APA variance, sometime between 1998 and 2003.

Burth noted that the Ulrichs reported the violation themselves. He said they have submitted plans to bring the structures into compliance by Oct. 1 of this year and won't be facing any fines or penalties.

"Agency staff will be executing a settlement agreement with the Ulrichs that requires implementation of these plans and, consistent with the agency's civil penalty guidelines, the settlement does not include a civil penalty, given the age of the violation, that it was self-reported and that the Ulrichs are agreeing to an appropriate remediation," Burth said.

Ulrich didn't attend Thursday's meeting. APA spokesman Keith McKeever said she was either on vacation or had another commitment.

Asked if Ulrich was trying to clear the matter up so it doesn't hinder her chances of getting the nomination as chair of the Park Agency, McKeever said those two things aren't related. He noted that Ulrich and her husband came forward to report the violations in 2008.

"It was just another case our enforcement division had to go through," he said. "I would think it really has nothing to do with a timing issue on some rumor or anticipated appointment. It's more just staff working through our caseload."

Monroe said he didn't think the matter would hinder Ulrich's chances.

"My guess is it was an inadvertent violation," he said. "I'm sure she wouldn't have done it intentionally, and now she just wants to clear it up."

The seat formerly held by Stiles is one of five positions on the agency board that have expired. The others are held by commissioners Arthur Lussi, Frank Mezzano, Bill Thomas and Cecil Wray, who can continue to serve until they're renominated or replaced.

If Ulrich moves up to the chair's seat, that would create another vacancy on the board.