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## Groups work quietly for APA seats

JON ALEXANDER

The terms of five Adirondack Park Agency commissioners will have expired at the end of June, and groups hoping to sway Gov. Andrew Cuomo's appointments are keeping their picks for the jobs close to the vest.

"Everyone feels the other side will take shots at those on the other side's list," said Fred Monroe, executive director of the Adirondack Local Government Review Board.

As of July 1, the four-year terms of APA Chairman Curt Stiles, Lake Placid businessman Art Lussi, former Johnsbury Supervisor Bill Thomas, New York City lawyer Cecil Wray and Hamilton County Supervisor Frank Mezzano will be officially serving on expired terms. Lussi, Thomas and Wray are already serving expired terms.

Both local governments and environmental organizations are hoping Cuomo will pluck candidates that best represent their goals. The issue of the rights of individual property owners versus the state's interest in preserving the park have traditionally defined the separation between the two sides.

After public outcry that followed then-Gov. David Paterson's appointment of Minerva boat builder and environmentalist Peter Hornbeck to replace Lussi, neither side is rushing to fight for APA seats in the press. Three members of the current APA board - Stiles, Wray and Dick Booth - are former members of the Adirondack Council, an environmental preservation group.

"We haven't wasted our opportunity to tell the governor who we want," said John Sheehan, spokesman for the Adirondack Council. He added that, unlike last year, the organization's choices aren't slated to be made public prior to the Senate confirmation process.

State Sen. Elizabeth Little, R-Queensbury, who held significant influence over APA appointments last year when she shot down Hornbeck's nomination during the Senate confirmation process, has been sending would-be commissioners to local government organizations for review.

Brian Towers, Chairman of the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages, said his organization has already interviewed more than a dozen potential candidates.

"I expect our letter to the governor should be in the mail by the end of this week or the beginning of the next," Towers said.

Local governments are drafting a list of candidates from which they hope the governor will choose new commissioners; especially for the APA chairmanship and three other seats slated

only for park residents. The legislative session concluded last week with no appointments. Officials said they don't expect any until the fall session at the earliest.

Both green groups and local governments are calling for balance, though each tends to define that term differently.

"We feel that the governor will try to balance his selections. But how he will do it is the question," Monroe said. "The worst-case scenario for us would be if he chose two environmental radicals and two moderates on property rights."

Towers said the names on the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages' growing list are a secret for now.

"I think we'll probably release the names we submitted shortly after it's received by the governor," Towers said. "I don't think any of the names we're putting forward are controversial."

For her part, Little has repeatedly called for Lussi's reappointment.

During his tenure at the APA helm, Stiles has seen local governments criticize his agenda, which sometimes redefined Agency jurisdiction over projects, and laud his outreach efforts.