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## APA seats will need to be filled

Environmental groups, local gov't assemble lists of candidates

By CHRIS KNIGHT Senior Staff Writer

Local government officials and environmentalists are working to assemble lists of candidates they'd like Gov. Andrew Cuomo to consider appointing to vacancies on the Adirondack Park Agency Board of Commissioners.

With five commissioners' seats either already expired or expiring at the end of this month, Cuomo has the potential to dramatically reshape the APA board. It's too soon to know, however, whether Cuomo will seek new nominees for the vacant seats or reappoint those who want to continue serving on the agency board.

State Sen. Betty Little, R-Queensbury, said Thursday that she hasn't heard any names Cuomo is considering yet.

"I don't know what the governor's considering but I know that in talking to the governor's office they were willing to receive a list (of candidates) from the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages and from the counties," Little said. "They're working on that list. They've interviewed people and talked to people."

The seats of three current APA commissioners - Lake Placid hotelier Arthur Lussi, New York City attorney Cecil Wray and former Johnsbury Supervisor Bill Thomas - have already expired. Two more are up at the end of this month: APA Chairman Curt Stiles and Commissioner Frank Mezzano. Four of the vacancies are in-Park seats. Wray's is the only out-of-the-Park seat that's expired.

Little said she thinks it's important that the APA chairman be a resident of the Park, citing the 2007 battle over former Gov. Eliot Spitzer's nomination of Richard Booth of Ithaca as chairman. The selection of an outside-the-Park resident as chairman drew sharp criticism from local government leaders in the Park and was later withdrawn. Booth was later confirmed to a non-resident seat on the board.

Meanwhile, the environmental group the Adirondack Council has also put together a list of candidates for the APA board.

"We've got a list that we're more than happy to provide to the governor," Council spokesman John Sheehan said Friday. "I think there are some strong candidates."

Sheehan wouldn't reveal who the Council would like to see on the board, citing "what happened to Peter Hornbeck by the witch-hunt gang out there."

Former Gov. David Paterson's appointment of Hornbeck, a Minerva boat-builder, to the APA board stalled last year amid concern by local government groups about Hornbeck's ties to environmental groups such as the Council and Protect the Adirondacks.

Sheehan said he thinks the APA board needs a conservation biologist and another environmental attorney. He also said the Council supports the renomination of Stiles as chairman.

"I think he's done a fine job," Sheehan said. "I don't see any reason for us to want to see somebody else in that job."

Sheehan said he thinks Cuomo could name potential APA nominees, who would have to be approved by the Senate, as soon as next week, given the approaching end of the current Legislative session.

But Little said she doesn't expect Cuomo to announce any APA nominations anytime soon.

"I don't think it's on their priority list right now with the things the governor is trying to do," she said. "But I think we will get to it. Most likely, the Senate will come back in the fall for confirmations."

With Republicans now back in control of the state Senate, Little is expected to play a key role in the confirmation process.

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