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Kennedy Seeking Unified Party

City Dems Splintered Before Election

by Pat DiMaggio
In an attempt to unify a splintered Democratic party, its titular head — Mayor Jim Kennedy — called a Citywide organizational meeting last week to reorganize and unify the City's strong Democratic base.

The meeting was held on March 18 at American Legion Post No. 5, Maple Avenue. Kennedy said invitations were sent to 4,600 registered Democrats Citywide, and about 150 residents attended the meeting. Democratic Committee Chairman Ron Matusaitis explained that the meeting

was an attempt to unify the Democratic Party in Rahway. "We've come a long way from two years ago," said Matusaitis. "But we still have work to do." Many blamed Kennedy for a split in the City's once strong Democratic Club when he ran off the regular

party line in his bid to wrest the mayoral seat away from long-time incumbent Daniel Martin in 1990. Kennedy denied these charges, however, saying he brought many Republicans and Independents over to his side of the aisle. "There was actually a growth in the

Democratic Party in 1990," explained Kennedy. "We picked up 10 percent of the Republican vote, and 1,000 Independents declared Democratic." Registered voters in Rahway number 6,000 Democrats, 5,000 Independents and 1,800

Republicans, according to Kennedy. Rahway City Council members Nancy Saliga, Sal Mione, James Jones and Chester Holmes attended the meeting to show their support of the mayor's attempt to reorganize the Democratic Party. Old-line

Democratic Council members Dennis Hemerway and Alex Shipley did not attend. Kennedy cited the accomplishments of his administration and discussed the direction of the party in the 1990s. He also asked the audience to break off into six

groups representing their wards in order to discuss possible candidates for this year's election. In November, all six ward seats will be up for grabs. The council is currently composed of a Democratic majority of six seats with a Republican minority of three seats.

Pediatric Unit Gets Five Mayors' Backing

A recent meeting of local mayors held at Rahway Hospital saw bipartisan support for the Hospital in its efforts to overturn the recent recommendation of the state Department of Health (DOH) that its pediatric/adolescent unit close.

Three Mayors — Jim Kennedy of Rahway, Bernard Yarusavage of Clark and Peter Sica of Carteret — were on hand last Thursday evening for a strategy meeting with Hospital officials and expressed outrage at the DOH's State Health Plan which includes the Rahway unit among 20 statewide slated for closing in favor of regionalized health care for children.

Kennedy, who spearheaded the show of support by the municipalities served by Rahway Hospital, said Mayors James McGreevey of Woodbridge and John Gregorio of Linden also have pledged their help. He referred to the implications of the state plan as "catastrophic" for the local communities as he praised the Hospital's unit for its family-centered individualized approach.

Kennedy assured the group that "both sides of the aisle in Trenton are aware of Rahway Hospital's plight. I am confident that the legislators will send a clear message to the DOH that the people really want health care available at the community level."

Sica concurred with Yarusavage, who commented that "the most successful efforts are team efforts." They promised to help the Hospital prepare its upcoming presentation to Local Advisory Board (LAB) III through which the DOH has mandated a 60-day period of appeal and comment.



STANDING TOGETHER BEHIND HOSPITAL... Clark Mayor Bernard Yarusavage, Carteret Mayor Peter Sica and Rahway Mayor Jim Kennedy are shown with Dr. Uma Viswanathan, Chairman of Rahway Hospital's pediatric/adolescent unit, before start of strategy meeting on efforts to overturn state Department of Health's recommendation to close unit. Also pledging their help were Woodbridge Mayor James McGreevey and Linden Mayor John Gregorio.

have "ample" opportunity to make its needs known during the comment period. Yoder reiterated the Hospital's goal to obtain modification of the State Health Plan that includes a recommendation not to close the pediatric unit. "We want to apply for designation as a community pediatric center," stated Yoder.

Dr. Uma Viswanathan, Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics, was on hand to provide the Mayors with a tour of the facility, which was renovated and newly equipped as part of a total Hospital expansion and modernization in 1988. She told the Mayors, "It is disturbing that the people most concerned with providing care for children with complicated health problems — namely, the pediatricians — were not consulted before the state Health Department chose to make its recommendations public."

Viswanathan's colleague, Dr. Franz Hummert, a Colonia pediatrician, emphasized, "We first learned of the recommendation by reading about it on the front pages of the newspapers." A graduate of the University of Heidelberg and of New York's Mt. Sinai Medical Center, Hummert observed,

"My experience at these two major medical centers convinces me that there is no more patient-centered care in the United States or in Europe that the patients receive at Rahway Hospital. This is particularly obvious in the flexibility of the nurses who are so accommodating to the parents of our young patients. No where have I

seen nurses call families after discharge to see how the children are doing, but at Rahway Hospital, it's a regular occurrence." Viswanathan told the Mayors, "The Hospital is a basic tool of the pediatricians. If this resource is removed, they will move out of the community and congregate closer to the regional centers."

Citizens who would like to help Rahway Hospital fight the closing of its pediatric unit are asked to visit the Hospital's main lobby and sign a letter of petition to the state Commissioner of Health provided by the Hospital's Patient Advocate.

Fish and Chips

Presbyterian Women of Second Presbyterian Church, Rahway, is sponsoring a Fish and Chips Dinner catered by Argyle Caterers of Kearney on Saturday, March 28, which will be served from 5 to 7 p.m.

Dessert and beverage are included in the donation of \$7. Children are accommodated by one dinner and two plates. Takeouts are available on presentation of a paid ticket. More information is available at the church office, 9 a.m. to noon or by calling, 388-1136, 574-3794 or 388-4908.

Concerned Citizens Plan Demonstration

Tomorrow at 5 p.m., the Concerned Citizens of Union County will have a picket line and press conference at the Lawrence Street entrance to the Union County incinerator site, to announce a demonstration on Saturday, April 25, to oppose construction of the Union County incinerator.

Anti-incineration and environmental groups from all over New Jersey are expected to participate, and nonviolent civil disobedience will take place at the incinerator site during the demonstration.

"Too much is at stake to let this project proceed in silence," he said. "The Concerned Citizens have chosen civil disobedience to demonstrate the seriousness of the threat and the depth of the injustice that this burner presents to ourselves and our children."

Hydrant Flushing

The City of Rahway's Division of Water will start its Spring Hydrant Flushing Program on Sunday, April 5. It is expected that the flushing procedures will take four weeks. Time of flushing will be from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., daily, to minimize traffic interruptions and to prevent discolored water to customers during normal daily usage. Customers drawing water during the above time-period can expect discolored water if they are in the flushing area.

A tentative schedule of hydrant flushing is posted at City Hall and the Library, and is included in the City Newsletter.

NOTE:
The 24 hour
NARCOTIC
INFORMATION
HOTLINE
for Rahway is
388-1553

Board Opposes Binding Arbitration

by Pat DiMaggio
Rahway's Board of Education went on record opposed to proposed legislation which would give teacher bargaining units the right to binding interest arbitration. At its regular meeting held last week, the board approved a resolution opposing the expansion of the right to binding arbitration to any employee group.

The New Jersey General Assembly is considering Bill 2791, which would allow teacher bargaining units the right to binding arbitration. According to the board, this bill would be a "usurpation of the powers" of a Board of Education, which is responsible for providing all students with a thorough and efficient education.

The binding arbitration law is currently available to police and firefighter unions. But binding arbitra-

tion should not be expanded to other employee groups because it has proven to be an expensive, time-consuming and inefficient method to resolve collective negotiations, according to Rahway's Board of Education.

The resolution opposing binding arbitration will be forwarded to Boards of Education in surrounding communities and to the legislative delegation representing Union County.

Also at last week's meeting, the board accepted retirements and appointed staff members and coaches. The board accepted the retirements of Corinne DeFronzo, Roosevelt School nurse, Gina Wieggers, High School foreign language teacher, and Betty Jane Frazier, Grover Cleveland elementary teacher, all effective July 1.

Cheri Gonor was appointed to the position of high school physical education/health teacher at a salary of \$28,693, pro-rated, and Linda Price was appointed as a secretary in the high school attendance office at \$14,836, pro-rated.

The board also adjusted the salary of Carolyn Rosenberg, area supervisor, to \$33,353, pro-rated, to reflect her attainment of 30 credits beyond the Masters degree. A pregnancy/child-rearing leave of absence was approved for Tracey Rogers, special education teacher at Roosevelt School, and an extended child rearing leave of absence was approved for Irene Reese, learning disabilities teacher consultant.

The appointment of George Jakovic as an assistant spring track coach at \$1,796 was ratified by the board, and an application was made to the county superintendent of schools to hire Sharon Barnes as head girls softball coach. The board voted to apply for Pre-school Handicapped Flow-Through Funds in the amount of \$39,360, and for Basic IDEA-B Flow-Through Funds in the amount of \$204,680. The board also voted to accept funds from the state Department of Education, Adult Education Basic Grant Program, in the amount of \$27,529.

Recreation Dept. Dance/Twirl Team Cited

by Pat DiMaggio

At a recent meeting, Rahway's City Council commended the "Debutantes," a competition dance/twirl team sponsored by the Recreation Department.

Mayor Jim Kennedy presented the group with a framed resolution in its honor and commended its performances which have led to the title of state champions.

The Debutantes have been competing since 1989 and have "distinguished themselves not only with victories but with the greatest poise, discipline and sportsmanship," according to the mayor.

Competitions won by the Debutantes include first place awards at the following sites: May, 1989, New Jersey Twirling Association (NJTA)-Trenton; March 18, 1990, National Baton Twirling Association (NBTA)-Somerville; May 20, 1990,

19, 1991, NJTA-Bloomfield, and March 29, 1992, NJTA-Bloomfield.

Because of its outstanding competition record, the Rahway Recreation Department Competition Dance/Twirl Team is entitled to compete in the National Baton Twirling Association competition, which will be held the fourth week in July in South Bend, IN, on the campus of Notre Dame College.

In order to raise funds for this trip, the Debutantes will be sponsoring fundraisers in the near future. For more information, call 381-8000, Ext. 322.

If any resident is interested in observing competition twirling, the Nation Baton Twirling Association will be holding a competition at the Rahway Intermediate School gymnasium on Sunday, March 29. The public is invited to attend and watch the Debutantes perform.

Candidate Night

The Rahway Teachers Association is sponsoring a Candidate Night for Board of Education candidates on Monday, March 30, in the Intermediate School Auditorium at 7:30 p.m.

Refreshments will be served afterwards in the school cafeteria. All are welcome.

RAHWAY SUPERMODEL ENDS HERE...

Monique Jackson of Rahway will be handing over her title of "13th Miss Supermodel" on Friday, April 3, at Ramada Renaissance, East Brunswick. Jackson, 5, has been involved in numerous activities during her reign, participating in several fashion shows, appearances at parties and as contestant at Miss New Jersey Teen & Petite Competition where she was "Miss Photogenic" out of 20 contestants. Three-year-old with blonde hair, blue eyes, and a sweet smile, Jackson is a natural.

THE DEBUTANTES — From left, Deborah, Michelle, and Betty Hemerway. Back row: Amanda, Margaret, Elizabeth, and Lisa Hemerway. Any Hemerway and Lisa Hemerway.