

RED BANK'S MOST PERNICIOUS ENEMY

MOVE TO TRANSFORM ITS BORING
POLITICS PICKS UP SUPPORT



Mark Taylor and
Mike Whelan

RED BANK — If there's one thing we fear at the triCityNews, it's that most pernicious enemy we face out here in suburbia:

Boredom.

This newspaper has led a twenty year fight to vanquish it. And we're winning the battle. The triCity region of eastern Monmouth has become as happening as any happening medium-sized city.

But pockets of resistance remain. Boring is always a powerful force. Like in Red Bank politics — basically a one-party state where whatever drab, boring candidate gets the Democratic nod gets elected in this Democratic town.

Red Bank's surprisingly large creative community continues to grow, but the town's politics and politicians hold the place back from greater things. The Democratic Party chairman is Ed Zipprich, who's also a Councilman. He's an idiot. Unfortunately, whoever Zip selects to run as the Democrat for council will almost always win. That makes Ed Z the most powerful man in Red Bank. Imagine that.

Here's what we proposed in these pages a month ago: Switch

the town to non-partisan elections held in May, where candidates all run in one column without party designation. Long Branch and Asbury Park have had that system for decades, as do nearby large towns like Tinton Falls and Ocean Township.

That way the voters, not a party boss like Ed Zipprich, will decide who governs Red Bank. In non-partisan towns, you normally get more candidates running because the political parties don't dictate who's on the ballot. Anyone can run. So you have more choices. May the best candidates win.

In this past election, we knew it would be a big Democratic year, particularly in a Democratic town like Red Bank, because of that Jackass-in-chief in the White House. In a rarity, there had been three Republicans on the six-member Red Bank Council. One of them — Linda Schwabenbauer, a tremendously talented, serious and non-partisan person up for reelection — didn't have a chance because she had the word Republican next to her name on the ballot.

So Schwabenbauer lost to Zipprich and another Democratic clown. It was ridiculous. If Red Bank voters want to ditch someone like Schwabenbauer in a May non-partisan election, so be it. But at least the vote would have been solely about that.

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And even more likely, the Democratic Party will let him vote against any pension reform as the Democratic leaders will strong arm enough Democrats to avoid needing Gopal's vote, reasoning that Gopal has one of the most competitive districts in the state and they'll let him be a hero to the unions to help him get reelected.

Lovely. Welcome to politics.

So that's what I say will happen. This Publisher will also be watching Vin if he's a pussy on any other votes. Hey, we're the triCityNews. We're here to help. In this case, to make sure young Vin Gopal becomes something like a statesman, instead of one more boring go-along, get-along politicians.

And if there's one thing we hate, it's boring. Especially in a politician.

This Publisher supported Jennifer Beck in the election because she took a gutsy stand on an important issue. After Donald Trump won the New Hampshire primary, all the Republicans in Monmouth County ran for the hills and would not answer whether they'd support him. Beck didn't flinch: She stated flat-out she could not support Trump in November. (She wrote in John Kasich.) Beck did what all of us who are scared and disgusted by Donald Trump want Republicans to do: Stand up and say the way this guy conducts himself is unacceptable.

Gopal said Beck opposing Trump was in her interest because Hillary Clinton carried their district, meaning her constituency leans Democratic. That was nonsense. Beck made her declaration early, and there are more than enough Trump Republicans to bury her in that district for speaking against the Dear

Leader. In a close race, she couldn't afford any defections from her political base — the same reason why Republicans in Washington who believe Trump is dangerous don't do more.

Jennifer didn't care. Let's see if Vin Gopal does the same when confronted with a decision that will anger his political base. Beck's risk was that a pro-Trump Republican could have run in a primary against her. Sure, Jennifer would have likely won that race, but a loud-mouthed Trumpian primary opponent would have alerted all the other Trump trolls to oppose Jennifer in November. Had the election been closer, those Trumpians would have buried her.

So let's see what Vin Gopal does when faced with a decision on an issue where doing the right thing jeopardizes his career. We'll keep you posted. Vin knows that!

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That's why this newspaper last month called for a ballot question asking Red Bank voters to switch to non-partisan May elections for mayor and council. That way any candidate from either party can have an equal shot. Rather than Ed Zipprich, of all people, deciding who holds office.

Turns out our article got some attention.

"When your article came out, I immediately took a photo of the cover and texted it to Mark and Linda," said Mike Whelan, one of the last two Republicans along with Mark Taylor on the council.

(It's hilarious, by the way, how people always take a photo of our cover to spread the word about a triCity article, since we refuse to put our content online and thus commit business hara-kiri like all the other newspapers.)

Whelan says that he, Taylor and Schwabenbaeur are committed to changing Red Bank to non-partisan elections and getting that question on the ballot, which requires a petition with enough signatures of registered voters. Whelan added that he and Taylor would love to run on bipartisan tickets with Democrats. That's how it should work. The triCityNews, for example, believes that gentleman Democratic Mayor Pasquale "Pat" Menna and now former Republican Councilwoman Linda Schwabenbauer would have been excellent running mates. That can happen in a non-partisan form of government.

And the system also allows talented newcomers to go right to voters, rather than wait years obsequiously serving a party machine. So you can quickly get outsider new blood.

Red Bank just needs more political competition, because the current system — as you'd expect in one party rule — breeds mediocrity. Even worse, it breeds boredom. That's even a biggest problem for us.

We predict Democrats, Republicans and Independents in Red Bank will want this change. The only ones who won't are the Democrats currently on the Council who don't want to worry about reelection. Same with the Democratic Party apparatchiks who want election victories to fall into their laps so they can hand out all the town's patronage plums

Let's see if this newspaper can spark this little mini-revolution in Red Bank. Something tells me we can. If Whelan, Taylor and Schwabenbaeur find some

Democrats to join them in the effort — and we say they will — this referendum can get on the ballot.

"Mark, Linda and I talked about your article for a couple hours and spent days back and forth texting about it," said Whelan. "Mark and I have always thought about this, but your article was an impetus. We are absolutely committed to this."

"I know the residents of Red Bank are sick of Red Bank politics, whether they're Democrats or Republicans. I think the residents are going to jump behind this and support it," he said.



Red Bank Councilman Ed Zipprich. Photo by RedBankGreen.com