



Republican incumbents and revolutionaries-in-the making Mark Taylor and Mike Whelan

VLADIMIR PUTIN WOULD LOVE RED BANK

GOP INCUMBENTS SHOULD BOYCOTT ELECTION AND WORK TO OVERTHROW SYSTEM

RED BANK — Democracy as we know it is on the run all over the world.

Vladimir Putin in Russia stage managing elections. In Turkey, Recep Erdogan has swept away almost all vestiges of a democratic system.

And in Red Bank, all-powerful Democratic Chairman Ed Zipprich decides who to put in power, with the voters of the borough effectively neutered.

It's absolutely absurd.

But it's a great analogy. Red Bank has what Putin would call "managed democracy." It's an overwhelmingly Democratic town, so whoever gets the nod to run by the party almost always wins in November.

And Ed Zipprich, who as party chairman, effectively makes that decision. Even worse, Zip is also a Councilman who's installed a bunch of dunderhead allies on the governing body to give him effective control. By the way, this is nothing personal against Zipprich. All our previous encounters with him have been pleasant enough. It's just as a public official he's an idiot, ripping the town apart and having way too much power.

So how do you end it?

You do what democracy advocates do. You overthrow the system. And there's a legal way to do that here in New Jersey.

In a rarity, there are actually two young Republican incumbents — Mike Whelan and Mark Taylor — on the six-member borough council. They face certain defeat should they run for reelection this November.

It's bad enough that Republicans can almost never win in Red Bank. It's even more rare for them to get reelected once they're in office. In the past 20 years, the only one has been Jennifer Beck, who went on to become a state Senator in Trenton.

But rather than submit to a sure loss, we demand Whelan and Taylor boycott this rigged election and not run again. They have until the filing deadline on April 2 to decide. Instead, they should join with progressive Democrats on the left in an alliance to overthrow the system.

Red Bank should have a non-partisan form of government just like the other two triCities of Asbury Park and Long Branch. In non-partisan elections, all the candidates are in one column, without party affiliation. Ideally, those elections should happen in May, like Long Branch does, so that the contest stands on its own, independent of what's going on nationally which can impact a November election.

Non-partisan local elections increase competition by giving everyone an equal shot. What could be more democratic than that? Obviously, that's what you should have at the local level. The only reason you don't is so local parties can keep control to hand out jobs and contracts to professionals and others. It's ridiculous.

Whelan and Taylor have publicly stated they will be pursuing triCity's call for a petition drive for a Red Bank ballot question to switch to a non-partisan government. State law allows for such a petition and referendum. That ballot question would win in Red Bank, as people all across the political spectrum want more competition, as well as opportunities for newcomers and outsiders to have an equal shot to win office.

And Red Bank would certainly want to end Ed Zipprich's Putin-like role in picking who runs the town.

First, Whelan and Taylor have to decide whether to run again. They're fools if they do. With the jackass-in-chief in Washington, this is going to be a big Democratic year with the mid-term Congressional elections, especially in a place like Red Bank.

Forget Red Bank for a second — let's hope that happens! The Democrats should

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control at least one house of Congress so they can investigate Donald Trump and expose him for the fraud that he is. Hopefully, he's not on the ballot again, so the country can have a sane choice.

But that impending and hoped-for Democratic wave nationally also means Whelan and Taylor are finished in November. Every Democratic or Democratic-leaning voter who'd normally not come out in this low-turnout Congressional election will be out this time sending a message to Trump and his Republican enablers. Once in the voting booth, they'll blindly pull the lever all the way down the Democratic column — including for Borough Council.

Whelan and Taylor should acknowledge that now and boycott the election.

Whelan and Taylor should acknowledge that now and boycott the election. They should get that non-partisan government petition drive going in alliance with Democrats, especially the progressive Bernie Sanders type Democrats. Those lefties also want a fair shot at winning council seats without needing the approval of Ed Zipprich and his small-minded and small Democratic clique. Hell, everyone in town, except for Zip and his little group, should want that.

A perfect liberal Red Bank figure to join the Republicans for this change of government movement is long-time Board of Education member Ben Forest, who sought

the nomination for Mayor this year in front of the local Democratic Party. He didn't have a chance. They renominated incumbent Pat Menna, who in all fairness is an eminently decent guy. But in a non-partisan system, Forest could have run on a level playing field. He should support a change of government.

There's just a wildly wide-ranging coalition waiting to change Red Bank to that non-partisan form of government and end Zipprich's absurd lock on power. It's one of those moments where it would all come together.

You'd have Bernie Sanders types who are shut out of power. Obviously, you'd have Republicans who want a fair shot. You'd have business owners and property owners in the commercial districts who can't stand Zipprich after he said Red Bank should go back to its "village" roots — even though the town is a vibrant micro-urban area. Zipprich's idea to somehow turn back the clock to make it a village like the little commercial sections of Rumson or Fair Haven is absurd. Unless you have a time machine to turn back the clock to 1910, there's no way to do it.

That's why we dubbed Zip and his allies the village idiots, in honor of their crazy village vision.

But you can scream about that all you want this November. You can have a spirited debate about all types of Red Bank issues. And it won't make a damn bit of difference. The Democrats — who Zipprich determined who will be on the ballot — will win no matter what.

So Whelan and Taylor should do what democracy activists do in places like Venezuela, Russia and Egypt — you boycott elections that are a farce, form a broad-based popular front opposition and then work to overthrow the system.

Viva la revolution!

NOT ASBURY LANES *continued from p.40*

so that the Asbury Park Press had multiple op-eds speaking out against the new Lanes renderings on their website. Thousands of comments against the new Lanes design have flooded social media.

Quite frankly the best thing iStar could have done was change the name. Or better yet, they should have just knocked the building down and started over. Why would you try and save something that so many people loved, completely gut it, throw all the past away and then completely redesign the space in a way that has absolutely nothing to do with what was there before. All they've done is piss off everyone who ever went to the Lanes.

The thing that irks me is this fake bullshit coming from iStar that they tried to save as much as possible and that they wanted to pay homage to the former space. They've done none of that. They'll make you believe the building was falling down and that's why they needed to completely gut it.

And the PR that has since come out from places like Conde Nast Traveler is just so obnoxious. One headline read "Asbury Lanes Could Make the Jersey Shore a Year-Round Destination". Really? What does that even mean?

Why try and be something you're not? Giving people a false hope that you were going to try your best to retain the Lanes the way it was was just a bad move.

Lets face it, the writing was on the wall last year when we first got wind that the entire place was gutted, the remnants and memories tossed in the dumpster. It was a true symbol of the change Asbury is currently undergoing and a pivotal moment for the future of Asbury's counter culture which is dying a slow yet increasingly accelerated death.

What will it look like here 5 years from now? The creatives, artists and musicians who made this place interesting in the first place may not be here anymore, instead replaced by the conformist suburban drunken frat boy douchebags who

are currently overtaking the city. Just stop by the downtown any weekend night and see what I'm talking about. These types will no doubt love Not Asbury Lanes and are perhaps the exact customers iStar is trying to target.

It's a sad finality for Asbury Lanes. I can't say I was ever optimistic that iStar would execute this properly. I don't blame them necessarily because they are doing what corporations do. They are trying to make as much money as possible. These aren't people like us who've been in the trenches here for so many years and who truly love and care about Asbury Park.

However there is still plenty to love about our city. I only hope that the proper balance is struck between true authentic creative expression and the corporate redevelopment that is here to stay. Some might say that iStar reopening the Asbury Lanes, even in their own vision, is an example of that balance. Depends on your perspective. I just can't help but mourn the Asbury Lanes that was such a huge part of my life for so many years. It was the true essence of family and community. Long live Asbury Lanes.

A rendering of the new Asbury Lanes

