



**Mark Taylor and Mike Whelan**



**Ed Zipprich**  
Photo by  
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# REVOLUTION RED BANK!

GOP INCUMBENTS BOYCOTT ELECTION; SEEK REFERENDUM FOR NON-PARTISAN SYSTEM

BY DAN JACOBSON  
PUBLISHER

RED BANK — Wow, the triCityNews may have just triggered one of our best political chain reactions since we began publishing almost 20 years ago.

Last week, we called on two young Republican incumbent council members to boycott this year's election, and instead work with independent Democrats to overthrow Red Bank's current system of government. That system has led to a stifling political culture in which the borough's Democratic Chairman Ed Zipprich, and his small group of small people, decide who will run the town. It's absurd, and the result has been horrible political stagnation in Red Bank, with talented people from all backgrounds locked out of power.

But there's nothing like the triCityNews to right such an injustice!

First-term Republican Councilmen Mike Whelan, 26, and Mark Taylor, 34, have heeded our call and will not run for reelection this year. Instead, they will remove themselves from all partisan campaigns while they work on a petition drive to get a ballot referendum before Red Bank voters to change the borough's form of government to non-partisan, like you have in the two other triCities of Long Branch and Asbury Park.

"In short, the system is broken," said Taylor. "I personally feel it is broken on every level, with true political discourse on life support and the combination of social media, talking heads and overzealous partisan politics driving a wedge between otherwise reasonably minded people. With that said, I'm focus(ing) my energy and passion on fixing the system in Red Bank."

In a non-partisan election, all the candidates for mayor and council are in one column without listing party affiliation. It's a great system. What Whelan and Taylor are proposing also ensures those elected have a mandate, with a second run-off election held if candidates don't get 50 percent of the vote. We

have that in Asbury Park, and it's important. For example, if a scrum of people run for mayor, some wacko can't slip in as high vote-getter with, say, 35 percent of the vote. If no one gets over 50 percent, a run-off election is held for the top two vote getters. That ensures those elected have a majority of voters behind them. There's a similar system for the council.

Red Bank is an overwhelmingly Democratic town, and whoever Dem Chair Zipprich picks to run as a Democrat wins about 90 percent of the time. Zip is also a councilman and has installed his dunderhead allies on the governing body. It's amazing — this guy, nice enough in person but an idiot as a public official, actually controls Red Bank!

But it's not only Republicans who are shut out of power. It's anyone else, including Democrats and Independents who don't have Zipprich's approval. So take a progressive Democrat, a minority, an Independent or a principled moderate Republican — basically, anyone outside of Red Bank's closed little power structure. They can all get on the ballot with an equal chance of winning in a non-partisan election.

Who wouldn't love that? The answer: Democratic Party politicians who want the current system to award lucrative contracts to professionals and others — and then those entities contribute to Democratic campaigns.

Whelan and Taylor are rare cases of Republicans winning in Red Bank. Still, in the past 20 years, only one Republican (Jennifer Beck) who made it to the council ever got reelected. The few others lasted only one term. And Whelan and Taylor face certain defeat in November, which will be a huge Democratic year as voters, particularly in Democratic towns like Red Bank, will rightly look to strike back at the jackass-in-chief down in Washington.

"Obviously, having to go through Ed Zipprich to get elected is going to block out anybody who is passionate, who loves Red Bank, who wants to get involved and who can really make a difference and who isn't in lockstep with everything

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that Ed Zipprich believes in," said Whelan.

Meanwhile, Whelan and Taylor are talking to Democrats and Independents who are locked out of power because they're not part of the favored little circle — basically, pretty much everyone in town — to join them publicly in a coalition to switch to nonpartisan. We love the imagery of all this. It's like a country fighting an autocracy: the opposition boycotts the election that's rigged, and forms a broad-based popular revolutionary front to overthrow the system!

"We've already approached multiple Democrats," said Whelan. "We haven't talked to anybody who's a Democrat or Independent who isn't interested at a minimum."

Whelan said in a non-partisan election he'd want to run on a bipartisan ticket with Democrats and Independents, singling out Democratic Councilman Erik Yngstrom as a running-mate he'd seek. Interestingly, his fellow GOP council member Mark Taylor was always an Independent, but in Red Bank's partisan system by law he had to change his registration to Republican to run in opposition to the Democrats. In a non-partisan system, he can go back to being an Independent and run.

On turning 18, Taylor said that "I chose not to identify with either party, because while I draw on perspectives from both sides, I could not bring myself to be so singularly labeled or constrained. However, when I chose to run (for Council) in 2015, I had to declare a party because there was no mechanism to win as an unaffiliated/independent candidate. In running as a Republican, I was marking myself not as a soldier for a national party, but as an opposition candidate to the local party that had had unchecked control for 25 years in town and, in my opinion, did not have the vision necessary to see Red Bank through to the next stage of its storied history."

Whelan and Taylor are proposing the elections be held in May, as most non-partisan towns like Long Branch, Ocean Township and Tinton Falls do. The local race is the only election on the May ballot and that means voters are focusing solely on the local issues and local choices. In November, there's

so much more going on and the local races get drowned out, or impacted by federal or state issues.

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If this gets on the ballot, we say it will pass. How could you not want this? For example, progressive Democrat Ben Forest, a well-liked long-time resident, sought to run for Mayor and went before Zipprich's Democratic Party for the nomination. He didn't stand a chance. In a non-partisan system, Forest can run for mayor, or council, with an equal shot to everyone else at getting elected. He doesn't need Zip's approval.

"I'm not someone on the outside saying let's just blow things up," Whelan said. "I'm someone on the inside who's seen the nastiness of Red Bank politics. Issues that should be non-partisan become so bitter."

"If you told me three years ago when I joined the council that I wouldn't be running for reelection, and I'd instead be working to change the form of government, I'd have said, 'Wow, Red Bank politics must be really ugly'," said

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