

# The Westbury Times

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## News

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### North Hempstead Dems Mull Future

By [Daniel J. McCue](#)

In the wake of the staggering defeat of Oyster Bay Town Supervisor Lewis J. Yevoli in this year's county executive race and in light of Republican victories in the local town board and town clerk races, North Hempstead's Democratic leadership will meet twice this coming weekend in their first attempt to regroup and develop a strategy for 1999.

The first meeting, to be held on Saturday morning at the request of Democratic Town Leader Larry Aaronson, will be attended by candidates, their campaign strategists, and key Democrats in the township like Arthur Gianelli, Lee Seaman, Jon Kaiman, Gerard Terry, Michael Miller, and Joe Galante.

The second meeting, to be held Sunday morning at the behest of Nassau County Democratic Chairman Stephen J. Sabbeth, will have a similar focus and be attended by many of the same players.

"Hopefully, when both these meetings are through, we'll all be on our way to attending the same church, so to speak," said one Democratic insider. "In the long run, if this soul searching continues, we may even wind up in the same pew."

"Essentially, my meeting is going to cover a lot of the things we always talk about post-election," Sabbeth said on Wednesday. "I'm a great believer in being prepared and we really do have to begin getting a cohesive strategy together for elections coming up in the next year or two."

In anticipation of the meeting, Sabbeth said he is having a report prepared on Election '97, a report that will focus not only on what went wrong in this year of the Gulotta landslide, but also what went right.

"In addition to carefully weighing the information in the report, I'm also looking to hear other people's evaluations and

I intend to be very open to suggestions.

"I think it's critical, both for the people and for the party, that we honestly work together to find ways to offer people better government and better candidates."

Joe Galante, now perhaps North Hempstead's chief Democratic political operative, is one of those who has been invited to both meetings.

"I think what both will share, in terms of an over-all theme, is that they'll both serve as forums of re-evaluation. I think [the Aaronson meeting] will also focus on where we go from here.

"There's a lot of rebuilding to do before the next supervisor's race in 1999, and I think we want to have a lot of the rebuilding done by fall of next year, so that we can road test the fruits of our efforts with next year's district court race."

Asked for his assessment of the Democratic organization in North Hempstead, Galante said, "I think there's been a lot of finger pointing and blaming since Election Day, and that's just not productive at all.

"You know, part of our problem was that the Republicans had a smart, southern tier strategy in the town, exploiting where their strength in registration lies, and it didn't help that Yevoli pulled in only 31 percent of the vote.

"Given those factors, May Newburger's re-election is a real statement. I mean, frankly, it's amazing," Galante continued.

"You know, it's really bizarre. Looking at the numbers, particularly the absentee ballots, it almost appears as if voters simply voted only for those people whose names they knew and ignored the rest of the candidates. I've never seen anything quite like it or quite so pronounced."

Many prominent Democrats see the juxtaposition of the two meetings as interesting since Sabbeth and Aaronson are considered by most to be mortal enemies.

The timing of the meetings is also noteworthy thanks to the latest squabble in the Democratic family, this one inspired by a post-election letter sent to Democratic committee members by the chairman.

In that two-page missive, written on November 13, Sabbeth blasted "the tragic performance" of Lew Yevoli at the polls. In all, he garnered only 31 percent of the vote in the county executive race.

Sabbeth continued by saying "the most important factor, in my view, is that we, the party leaders, myself included, permitted a candidate to head our ticket after he publicly

stated his opposition to the party, and indicated that he was not interested in receiving financial assistance from us."

He closed by saying that the time had come for Nassau Democrats to pull together and work to heal party wounds. "Let's work in harmony to defeat Pataki and D'Amato," he said. "Let's re-elect our fine public officials... Harvey Weisenberg, Tom DiNapoli, and Carolyn McCarthy."

Some who read the five paragraph letter, however, found the chairman's tone a bit "too strong" and "too anxious." Some described it as "too obvious an attempt to shift blame" for Democratic defeats this year. Others simply said, "there are some things you say to members of an organization in writing, and some things you save to tell them face-to-face. Many of these statements fall under the category of the latter."

Most vociferous in his criticism was Jay Jacobs, a relative newcomer to the party organization who has twice unsuccessfully attempted to unseat Sabbeth as chairman.

"When I read that letter, my blood just boiled," Jacobs said.

The Woodbury resident then sent out his own letter, defending Lew Yevoli, who had championed the Jacobs bid for the chairmanship, while blasting Sabbeth.

However, even Jacobs had to concede that Yevoli's candidacy was somewhat less than it should have been. In fact, when it was put to him that he and Larry Aaronson probably did more on Yevoli's behalf than Yevoli did, he was hard-pressed to deny it.

"I don't want to get into what Lew didn't do or could have done better," Jacobs said. "I think there were a lot of things we all could have done better. If people argue that he sometimes failed to look like a viable candidate, they have a legitimate point."

Jacobs also harshly rebuked Sabbeth for not supporting the Yevoli campaign financially, this despite the fact that Yevoli, in announcing his candidacy, said he would not seek nor accept support from the chairman, with whom he has had a longtime feud.

"The reason he said that is because Sabbeth didn't have any money to give him," Jacobs said.

Democratic sources close to Sabbeth contend that talk of the Democratic party being broke is little more than empty criticism, and that in actuality, the chairman raised close to \$200,000 this past year.

The same sources said Sabbeth would have been all too happy to help Yevoli, if only Yevoli had sought the help. "Listen,

Sabbeth's no idiot," this source said. "He knows as well as anyone that if the front of the ship is sinking, the bottom is going to sink just as fast. If Lew had been willing to accept the party's help, it might have significantly increased our chances of winning in other areas."

"The second part of this thing is, while Lew needed money, he also needed workers, and they never showed because Sabbeth told the core Democrats, those he has working at the Nassau Board of Elections, that if they helped Lew they would have been fired."

[Note: this newspaper tried, without success, to find people willing to verify such threats on promise of anonymity. No one came forward.]

Jacobs further maintains that the federal indictment of Sabbeth on bankruptcy fraud charges, helped dissuade quality people from running for office on the Democratic line this year. He described the candidacy of one, Dennis Holland, who ran for county comptroller, "as laughable." This despite the fact that Holland significantly out-pollied Lew Yevoli, percentage-wise, in every section of the county.

"People just don't want to be tied to the smell of a felon," Jacobs said. "My point though, is this, how much help did people really get from the county organization?"

Said Stephen Sabbeth, "Jay Jacobs ran Lew Yevoli's campaign and managed to get him 31 percent of the vote. At this point, he's inconsequential."

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