



OPINION
USUALLY RIGHT
BY JIM LANGAN

MOLINARO WILL BE TOUGH TO BEAT

If there's anyone out there feeling the effects of sky-high gas prices, it's Assemblyman Marc Molinaro. The man is everywhere and his recent announcement he's running for county executive has only increased the amount of territory he must cover.

But cover it he does. I can't tell you the number of times someone has said to me, "I was just with Marc Molinaro," or, "I just saw Molinaro in Fishkill and he'll be here shortly." What makes Molinaro different from your garden-variety political candidate is he does it with aplomb. You never get the feeling he's in a hurry or has three more stops to make. He may, but he never lets it show. He's unfailingly polite and conveys a sincere interest in what people have to say.

All of which says his Democratic opponent, Dan French, has his work cut out for him this fall. French, the current Beekman supervisor, has an impressive political record. French was the only Democrat on the Beekman Town Board for five years before being elected supervisor in 2009. He is an unabashed liberal and is on record as opposing any attempts to scale back Obamacare. His website prominently displays photos of French with Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand and Sen. Chuck Schumer. Given Dutchess County skews slightly Republican these days, lockstep liberalism may not be the fastest way to voters' hearts.

Then there's the visibility factor. Even though Molinaro isn't much older (36) than French (29), it feels

like Molinaro has been on the political radar screen since the Eisenhower years. That's because Molinaro was first elected to public office as village trustee in Tivoli when he was 18 years old. French is a relative novice compared to the seasoned Molinaro. Like it or not, all those rubber-chicken dinners and public events translate into recognition and votes, assuming the impressions are favorable. French is still in the process of introducing himself to Dutchess County voters, not to mention potential financial contributors.

But here's what makes Marc Molinaro such a formidable candidate. Not only does he have almost unanimous support amongst Republicans, he has demonstrated an ability to reach across the political aisle with great success.

Molinaro was asked by Gov. Andrew Cuomo to play a significant role on his transition team and continues to work closely with the famously Democratic governor. In a time of bitter partisan divide, it's refreshing and productive to see an elected official putting his constituents ahead of the party. Having a good working relationship with a sitting governor can only benefit Dutchess County down the road.

Does that mean Dan French has no chance? No, but it's going to be a challenge. Not only is French butting heads with a savvy and popular political figure, he's bucking fairly substantial Republican head winds in general. Unless there is a dramatic and sudden change in the country's economic fortunes, voters are likely to opt for Republicans in this off-year election. With unemployment still at unacceptable levels and voters concerned about higher taxes and fewer services, Molinaro makes an attractive candidate. He brings experience, charm and a willingness to govern by consensus. The ball is very much in Dan French's court.

Jim Langan can be reached at editorial@thehudsonvalleynews.com.

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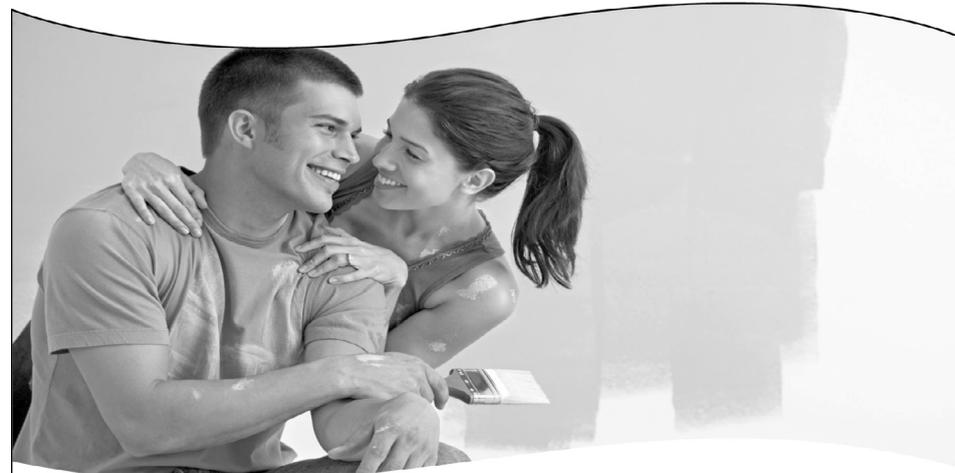
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TO THE EDITOR:

I enjoy reading your articles about the town board from Hyde Park. I have just one question. Can't those idiots be impeached and kicked out, since they were voted into office? Thanks. Also, I was a big fan of *The Harlem Valley Times* and am very happy to be able to read your paper.

**Pauline Marston
Wingdale**



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