

BACKROOM DEALS



Hikind Hoping to Work for Romney?

Further adding to the speculation that he intends to retire soon, Democratic Assemblyman Dov Hikind made the trek out to Florida this week to campaign on behalf of Republican Mitt Romney for President. "Hikind has always supported Republicans. So that's not surprising," said one political insider. "However Hikind leaving his district for a week to go to Florida is unusual. Perhaps Dov think he can get a job in the Romney administration," one insider concluded. Another insider mused "Is this a PR stunt? After all, how many little old ladies in Boca Raton even know who Hikind is?"

Regardless, Hikind has missed no opportunity to promote Romney over the last few months. He has gone on national news shows, spoke out on his own radio show and even placed a bet with former NY Governor David Patterson that Romney would beat Obama by a wide margin. Dov is running for re-election for what would be his thirtieth year in office. Many insiders have speculated that Hikind would like to retire to clear the way for his son Yoni to run for his seat. A job in the Romney administration would surely provide Dov with a clear exit.

Shakeup in Community Board

Community Board 12's new chasidic chairman, Yidel Perlstein, brought about the reforms he promised when elected earlier this year. Mr. Perlstein shook up the Community Board this past week when he announced that the heads of all four major committees would

change. The most significant of the changes was the installation of David Schlomovich as Chairman of the powerful Zoning and Variances Committee and Mendy Reiner as vice-chairman.

However, in what appears to be a sign of Mr. Perlstein's maturity he did not banish the former chairman, Peter Rebenwurz. Rather Perlstein moved Mr. Rebenwurz to chair the Housing Committee. In other moves, Sandy Aboulafia was promoted to chair the Transportation Committee from her previous role as vice-chair. Motty Katz, coordinator of Boro Park Shomrim was also promoted from vice-chairman to chairman of the Fire, Safety and Police Committee.

"Yidel used his power surgically," noted one long-time Community Board member who did not vote for Mr. Perlstein. "The changes that he made were responsible and will clearly improve the function of the community board. In short, I'm impressed."

Community First Dumps Storobin

In a sign of his flagging campaign, we're told that Community First, the fledgling political organization founded by attorney Nachman Caller, is no longer supporting Republican David Storobin's re-election for State Senate. While Community First has not endorsed Democratic candidate Simcha Felder, an endorsement is expected soon. Insiders say executive director Moshe Friedman met this week with Simcha Felder to patch things up.

While Community First has denied running the infamous "No Simcha" campaign, as

soon as we were informed of this reconciliation, we also discovered that the "No Simcha" website had taken down all of the negative information on former Councilman Simcha Felder. "This is a smart move by Friedman," said one insider. "Storobin's ship was sinking, Friedman had no choice but to jump on the life boat and paddle away."

Orthodox Jew Appointed Jewish Liaison to Governor

A mere two years after his landslide victory, Governor Andrew Cuomo has finally hired a Jewish liaison. David Lobel, former aide to political consultant Ezra Friedlander was hired by Cuomo's political team to manage Jewish relations for the Governor. Insiders were wondering if and when the Governor would get around to hiring someone to help him smooth over his relations with the Jewish community.

"I think that Cuomo thought that with his approval ratings he did not need a Jewish liaison," explained one insider. "However, recent events, especially his veto of a special-ed bill that was the top priority for the frum community, required Cuomo to rethink that strategy. Hiring an Orthodox Jew was a smart choice. Whether he can fix the damage that was done, remains to be seen."

This is something of a coup for Mr. Friedlander who has a history of taking young political operatives and placing them in positions of importance. Simcha Eichenstein, the chasidic wunderkid who works for Comptroller Tom DiNapoli also got his start in Friedlander's office.

Goldfeder Bucks Frum Community That Elected Him

In a surprising development, we're told that Assemblyman Phil Goldfeder is challenging the leadership of Far Rockaway's Jewish community by supporting incumbent Democratic Senator Joe Addabbo over Republican challenger Councilman Eric Ulrich. The Far Rockaway Jewish Alliance has determined that Ulrich would deliver more resources for the frum community especially in the area of reducing the cost of yeshiva tuition. However, Goldfeder is sticking with Addabbo despite calls to him from furious Jewish leaders.

"Phil is taking a big risk. If he doesn't deliver a significant amount of votes for Addabbo it will be clear that he has no juice within the frum community," said one political consultant. "It's a little surprising to see him bite the hand that fed him so early in his career. After all, without the support of Far Rockaway's frum community he would still be working for Senator Schumer."

Insiders speculate that Goldfeder is trying to curry favor with powerful Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver by showing him that he is willing to go against the frum community on behalf of the Democratic Party.

Dov Gordon is a political maven with unrivaled sources in the New York political world. Have a tip for Dov? Email him at dov.gordon@theyeshivaworld.com. As you can see from his column, he guarantees all his sources confidentiality. Please note, this column is an opinion piece. The views reflected here are solely of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of YWN.

