



NIAGARA COUNTY
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: CHRISTIAN W. PECK
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
TEL: (716) 439-7241
FAX: (716) 439-7058

September 23, 2009

**LEGISLATURE SEEKS APPLICANTS TO FILL VACANT SEAT
NON-PARTISAN PROCESS WILL RESTORE 9th DISTRICT REPRESENTATION**

NORTH TONAWANDA—Niagara County lawmakers initiated a process Tuesday to fill the vacant 9th District legislative seat in North Tonawanda for the remainder of the year, vowing to ensure North Tonawanda has three representatives as the county begins its budget process.

Legislature Chairman William L. Ross, C-Wheatfield, formed an ad hoc committee comprised of himself, North Tonawanda Republican Paul Wojtaszek, and Niagara Falls Democrat Jason Cafarella. The trio will conduct interviews of qualified applicants for the vacant seat and advance a nominee to the full Legislature.

"It's important that we have representatives from both sides of the aisle, so there's a member from the Minority Caucus—Jason Cafarella of Niagara Falls—and I have been appointed by Chairman Ross to represent the Majority Caucus," Wojtaszek explained. "I think it's a good appointment, because I'm also from North Tonawanda, and I'm in tune with the needs and concerns of [the 9th District]."

A legal advertisement soliciting applicants for the vacant post was purchased in several area newspapers to run in Thursday editions.

Applicants must be residents of the 9th Legislative District, which comprises the northwest portion of the city of North Tonawanda, as well as U.S. citizens at least 18 years of age. They also may not be employees of Niagara County. Under the Legislature's rules for filling vacancies, any nominee must also be a member of the party in which the former legislator was enrolled; in this case, only enrolled members of the Democratic Party may be considered.

Applicants must provide a résumé and letter of interest, which must be postmarked no later than Friday, Sept. 25. Mail résumé and letter of interest to:

**9th District Vacancy Ad Hoc Committee
c/o Mary Jo Tamburlin
Clerk, Niagara County Legislature
175 Hawley St.
Lockport, N.Y. 14094**

Wojtaszek said the ad hoc committee would review applications to determine which applicants met the criteria to serve and would contact applicants.

"We've set aside next Tuesday, Sept. 29, at 7 p.m. to interview all applicants that have their résumés in by the deadline," Wojtaszek said. "We are going to be prepared to ask all relevant and appropriate questions. And they're going to be tough questions. We're going to make sure that people are conversant on the issues facing the Legislature. We're going to do our homework, and hopefully they'll do theirs."

The committee will conduct interviews at the offices of the Niagara County Center for Economic Development, 6311 Inducon Corporate Drive, Sanborn. Wojtaszek said the committee will then forward its recommendation for a candidate to fill the vacancy to the entire Legislature so it can act on the nomination at its Oct. 6 meeting.

Wojtaszek noted that while the term of office for the individual selected to fill out the 9th District term would be short, that individual would be expected to serve as a member of a committee, as well as to take part in budget deliberations this fall.

“Legislators are duty-bound and obligated to represent the interests of their constituents, but not only their constituents. They also are expected to represent the interests of the entire County of Niagara,” Wojtaszek said.

Cafarella, who was asked to serve on the committee at Tuesday night’s meeting of the Legislature by Ross, said he’d initially been surprised by the offer, but looked forward to working with Ross and Wojtaszek.

“To sit with them to interview potential candidates for the 9th District I think will be a great opportunity and it will be a great service to the 9th District,” Cafarella said.

Cafarella echoed Wojtaszek’s belief that despite the short term of office for the individual the committee will nominate, that individual will participate in some key deliberations.

“I’m very happy that I will be helping select a legislator who will serve a short term, but I believe it’s very important that every community has adequate representation,” Cafarella said. “It’s very important that we have this seat filled and the 9th District has representation. Barring any catastrophes, the budget process is going to be our big focus, and it’s going to be a very interesting time for the 9th District legislator.”

Cafarella also praised Ross’s decision to set up a non-partisan committee to select the 9th District legislator.

“I’m very happy that the Legislative body selected a very diverse group, with a Democrat, a Republican, and a Conservative sitting on the committee to select our next 9th District legislator,” Cafarella said. “I’m sure the process will be very open and fair, and knowing my colleagues who sit on that committee with me, I’m positive that we’re going to have a great experience.”

The 9th District seat was vacated Sept. 1 when former Legislator Andrea McNulty resigned and announced plans to move to Pendleton, which lies outside her district.

###