

OPINION

ENDORSEMENTS

Suffolk will survive, thrive with Bellone

There is a time to tread water, and a time to swim full on to your destination.

You tread when you want to conserve energy and there's nothing in sight to grab onto or buoy you. Basically, you're biding time and managing to keep your head above water — something Suffolk County as a government and as a region has done for years. But when the shoreline, a boat or a lifeline is in plain view, you pull out your strength and, conquering the current, head straight toward that target, something Suffolk can do with the right leader.

And the key target — job growth on Long Island — is not far off, thanks to Accelerate Long Island, the research-entrepreneur collaborative that Brookhaven Supervisor Mark Lesko and the Long Island Association have offered up. It's time to swim, without holding back. Because if you tread water too long, sooner or later, you're going to run out of steam and sink.

The candidates for Suffolk county executive embody each end of the sink-or-swim spectrum in their different approaches toward economic development.

County Treasurer Angie Carpenter, a Republican, is the one treading water. She says we don't need grandiose plans to close in on our goal. First, it's easier to keep the businesses that are at hand than to attract new ones on the horizon, according to Carpenter, so as such we should focus on retaining companies in Suffolk. Secondly, in attracting new employers, she says, we should cut red tape so their companies can get permits and open for business in a timely and not prohibitive manner.

Not many people would disagree that the county should pursue both the options Carpenter espouses, and in her current job, she has done her part to help businesses navigate county bureaucracy. But those efforts alone are not enough to spur the kind of economy we have sorely needed in Suffolk, recession notwithstanding. For at least a decade, maybe more, politicians have complained about the alarming loss of companies, jobs opportunities and young, educated workers — all contributing to a “brain drain.” Retaining jobs and streamlining the permitting process by themselves won't keep us from eventually sinking; they will merely allow us to hold on a bit longer.

The swimmer in the county chief race is Babylon's supervisor of 10 years, Steve Bellone, a Democrat who has a vision of the target and wants to go for it. He, like Carpenter, acknowledges the need for government reform when it comes to the business-permitting process. However, he also embraces economic engine plans like Accelerate Long Island and brings a few new ideas for complementing such lifelines so Suffolk's economy can truly thrive. For one, Bellone has proposed the creation of low-tax “innovation zones” on publicly owned lands that aren't already on the tax rolls. Those zones would

incentivize high-tech companies to locate in the county, thereby creating high-paying jobs for an educated workforce. At the same time, it would create a minor stream of revenue for the county. He also proposes creating a Suffolk Innovation and Research Fund to help startups, using Industrial Development Agency money that is languishing; and helping expand an innovative engineering program at Suffolk County Community College.

Bellone applies the same progressive attitude toward an energy program.

Carpenter's chief proposal to address rising heating costs is to prevent NYPA's threat — that it will stop delivering power to the Suffolk County Electrical Agency — from becoming a reality. While that is a necessary effort, Bellone has already shown how much further he can go in advancing the county's energy concerns.

Under his watch, in 2006, Babylon was the first town in the nation to require the energy-efficient LEED certification for any new buildings, public and private, which a summary by the U.S. Green Building Council confirms. The same year, Babylon and Brookhaven led other Long Island municipalities in adopting Energy Star standards for new homes. In 2008, Babylon also created Long Island Green Homes as the country's first Property Assessed Clean Energy program. Bellone said LIGH allows residents to make their homes energy efficient without any up-front or ongoing costs. Improvements are paid for with the energy savings from making those improvements, he said, thus helping homeowners save money while improving the environment and creating jobs — “all at no cost to taxpayers.”

It's apparent to us also, that Bellone, as an executive for so many years, has what it takes to lead rather than linger when Suffolk needs it most. The time is right to put him at the helm.

So what will it be, Suffolk County, continue to tread water or finally swim? Times Beacon Record Newspapers will go with the latter and endorses Steve Bellone for county executive.

Lesko should keep leading

Supervisor Mark Lesko admits it is difficult to solve the unemployment problem from a local level, but he has made an effort to bring business to Brookhaven. His Blight to Light program encourages developers to transform blighted properties into functioning businesses or residences, which has the added benefit of eliminating community eyesores. He also worked on Accelerate Long Island, through which Brookhaven National Laboratory, Stony Brook University and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory work together in order to commercialize research innovations at the institutions. Because the world is constantly moving in the direction of technology, if done properly, this program will undoubtedly help Long Island out of its economic slump.

Even though times are difficult, Lesko is also managing the town budget in a satisfactory way, making cuts wherever possible and aiding residents with tax freezes. Although his challenger, town Planning Board Deputy Chair Cecile Forte, seems like a capable person, Lesko is doing an outstanding job as town supervisor and should be allowed to

continue steering Brookhaven toward the light.

We endorse the re-election of Brookhaven Supervisor Mark Lesko.

The 1st District needs SFR

Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld is a man who is passionate about his community and does what he thinks is best for his neighbors. He has a long history of advocating for the environment, which is equally as important as other issues, regardless of the economy. If we were to put off these sorts of items until times are better, we would end up putting them off indefinitely. Fiore-Rosenfeld is on the case and has stated that land preservation is one of his highest priorities.

The councilman has also supported freezing taxes, is present in the community and makes himself available to residents. He led the push for the referendum that separated the town into council districts before he was elected councilman, making councilmembers accountable to residents in a specific area.

Some say Fiore-Rosenfeld neglects areas that are south of the coastline but, in recent memory alone, the councilman has brought an Operation Clean Sweep initiative to Port Jefferson Station and has helped the town acquire more land in the Terryville Greenbelt conservation area next to Comsewogue High School and clean it up; also he helped the Comsewogue Historical Society acquire and renovate the Terryville Union Hall, getting it landmark status.

We endorse the re-election of Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld for Brookhaven's 1st Council District.

Hahn is a proven leader

Kara Hahn has shown herself to be a true leader through her work in the Civic Association of the Setaukets and Stony Brook as its president. The former chief of staff to term-limited Vivian Vilorio-Fisher — who Hahn is running to replace — and current director of communications for the county Legislature's Presiding Officer Bill Lindsay, Hahn has insight and experience with how county government works and how it can be improved.

She was named The Village Times Herald's Woman of the Year in Civics in 2009 for her hard work, determination and heart for our community. She has affirmed that selection subsequently through her hard work.

Hahn has shown that she's committed to our community, providing solutions as a civic president and community leader, and we're eager to see what she can do if elected to serve on the county level. She should focus on the issues she knows well from her service to Three Village and if she does, she will represent the 5th Legislative District well.

Her priorities are making government function more smoothly and efficiently. That means cutting red tape for businesses going through the application process and getting rid of duplicative services. Running more efficiently also

Continued on page A24

Check the Port Jefferson blog

Get into the mix @
www.northshoreoflongisland.com