GOP Caucus: Marks, Koons Win Two Board of Selectman Nominations

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Selectman Susan Marks and newcomer Kip Koons won the two Board of Selectman seats contested by four candidates at Monday night's Darien Republican Town Caucus.

The votes: Susan Marks, 274; Kip Koons, 231; Spencer McIlmurray, 59; Joe Warren, 41. About 320 people registered for voting at the caucus, according to Darien's two registrars of voters.

"I had a great group of people working with me as a team" to get this victory, Marks said in an interview after the vote. "It was a team victory."

"I'm just looking forward to the campaign between now and November, talking to the voters, getting feedvback from them, listening to them" she said. "And I thank everyone for coming out and supporting Kip and me.

"I'm proud of the amount of Republicans we were able to get out on a Monday night at the end of July," she said.

Joe Warren said he would consider going to a primary if others intended to do so, but he hesitated to force the town to spend perhaps $9,000 if he was the only candidate. He said he had no intention of running in the general election as an independent candidate.

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This article had these continual updates during the Republican Town Caucus.

7:14 p.m. — The caucus is starting late. Republicans are still coming in and getting their registration checked in the hallway. The Auditorium isn't nearly full, but there are more than 200 here already.

7:21 p.m. — The doors aren't closed yet, but the meeting has started.

7:23 — The Auditorium is much closer to being full. At least 300 seem to be present.

7:27 p.m. — They're introducing the Rules Committee now. Karen Armour, Republican Town Committee Chair, made this statement: "Some of you may have seen or heard about a piece of campaign literature that was distributed recently by Spencer McIlmurray. It said it had been paid for by the Republican Town Committee. The RTC has not paid for any campaign literature. The item in question has been destroyed. We apologize for the error." — from the agenda (or script) prepared beforehand.

7:33 p.m. — Uncontested candidates have been declared winners at the caucus.

7:34 p.m. — They're getting to the Board of Selectmen candidates. They'll have a secret ballot.

7:36 p.m. — Reporters have been allowed in the Auditorium now. The announcement was just made that people in the audience can now go vote and leave early, if that's what they want. Quite a few are lined up at the back, near the ballot boxes.

7:38 p.m. It appears there are closer to 400 people in the room than to 300.

7:41 p.m. — Liz Mao, chair of the Board of Finance, is speaking on behalf of First Selectman Jayme Stevenson.

7:43 p.m. — Mao says, "There is no one I've seen more effective than Jayme and shepherding these things

(various town projects) and getting everyone together."

7:44 p.m. — Doug Milne is starting to speak on behalf of Kip Koons.

7:46 p.m. — "Kip was one of the early youth hockey coaches here in town" in the 1970s. His background "speaks for itself. [...] He gets on a board, he stays for five or six years, and he ends up being the chairman. [...] He is usually the best-prepared person in the room. [...] He can work with anybody."

7:45 p.m. — Applause from most of the room after Milne speaks. Now Selectman Jerry Nielsen is speaking on behalf of Susan Marks.

7:47 p.m. — Nielsen: "Susan has dedicated the past 20 years to making our schools a better place. [...] She's brought to our board that enthusiasm and can-do attitude [...] She reaches out to employees, residents and other stakeholders to make sure she has all the information she needs. [...] I believe the continuity she brings is imperative for a smooth transition in the upcoming two years." Quite a bit of applause when he's done. Spencer McIlmurray is at the podium to speak on behalf of himself.

7:51 p.m. — McIlmurray says: "When asked what could be done to make Darien work better, one individual said, 'Darien needs to be run like a corporation and not a candy store."" He gets a very respectful round of applause. Joe Warren gets up to speak on his own behalf. Each speaker has two minutes.

7:52 p.m. — Warren: "This is your opportunity to decide what you think the future of Darien should look like." The town is faced with decisions that will "vastly impact" the future of Darien "15, 20, 30 years from now."

7:53 p.m. — Applause was warmest for Kip Koons and Marks, less so for McIlmurray and Warren.

7:54 p.m. — All have been asked to go vote. People are lining up again.

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7:57 p.m. — Joe Warren walks by. "We'll see what happens," he said.

8:00 p.m. — Looks like just about every ballot has been cast.

8:03 p.m. — The chairman, Michael Murray, asks, "Has everybody voted who wishes to vote?" The room is emptying out. "The polls are closed," the chairman states.

8:17 p.m. — Still waiting for the results.

8:25 p.m. — Still waiting for the results. About 30 people are left in the room.

8:27 p.m. — Republican Town Chairman Karen Armour says this caucus is only one step in the process. Candidates dissatisfied with the result are able to force a primary if they submit enough petition signatures. Candidates can also run as independent candidates without a party (again, enough petition signatures would be needed). There's been talk that candidate Joe Micelli, a former selectman, may run for first selectman.

8:28 p.m. — On Tuesday night, Darien Democrats will meet in the same room for their town caucus. The Democratic Town Committee has not announced endorsements of any candidates.

8:55 p.m. — They'll be ready in a moment to announce the results.

8:56 p.m. — Marks and Koons are the winners.

8:58 p.m. — Votting results: Susan Marks, 274; Kip Koons, 231; Spencer McIlmurray, 59; Joe Warren, 41.

9:08 p.m. — No one else is left in the auditorium, now. Republicans are gathering at Jimmy's Southside restaurant and bar in the Noroton Heights Shopping Center.