

## **Overtured: Five in Leadership of Darien Republican Town Committee Voted Out**

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When the results of Monday night's Darien Republican Caucus were read out to an auditorium with few but the candidates still present, the top 21 vote-getters who won seats on the Town Committee did not include five members who were in leadership positions.

RTC Chairman Karen Armour didn't make the cut; nor did Vice Chairman Vin Burke; nor Secretary Laurie Williamson; nor Publicity Chair Nanci Natale; nor Recruitment Chairman Malcolm Hall Jr. (Treasurer Bert von Steulpnagel was re-elected, one of two candidates with the fourth-highest vote total.)

All eight petitioning candidates were elected: James Demark, Belinda Bewkes Metzger, Jane Nedder, Alexander Davidson, Christine Simpson Stone, Walter Cusick Donovan, Thomas Bell and Jacqueline

Calabro.

Candidates for seats were asked to stay in the Town Hall Auditorium to hear the results and sign a statement that they had heard them. After the vote was announced, at about 9:30 p.m., the room was, for the most part, very subdued, apparently in respect for the members who didn't win election. One person waved and gave a brief shout, and that was about it.

Nanci Natale got up and left first. As she walked up the center aisle, she turned and said, "Congratulations, everybody!" Selectman Susan Marks stayed to watch the conclusion, a bit more than six months after she had won the party's endorsement back at a similarly crowded GOP Caucus when the Town Committee hadn't endorsed her for re-election to the Board of Selectmen.

Selectman Kip Koons, who had urged Republicans not to vote for the RTC leadership, had already left for the night.

The elections were for a two-year term that begins only in March, so current RTC members retain their seats until then, Armour said earlier in the day.

A total of 220 Republicans voted in the caucus. Here are the results, which were read out from the highest vote-getters to the lowest (petitioning candidates are in italics):

**ELECTED:**

Seth Morton — 160

Frederick Conze — 158

Douglas McKay — 155

Raymond Slavin — 154

Bert von Stuelpnagel — 154

Bonnie Frate Dora — 148

Joseph Hardison III — 146

Mary Forman Flynn — 144

Charles "Kip" Koons III — 137

David Carey Woll Jr. — 136

*Thomas Bell — 135*

David Anthony Brown — 135

Brent Thomas Hayes — 130

*Belinda Bewkes Metzger — 128*

*Jane Nedder — 127*

*Christine Simpson Stone — 127*

*James Demark — 125*

*Walter Cusick Donovan — 124*

Christopher Taylor — 123

*Jacqueline Calabro — 121*

*Alexander Davidson — 117*

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**NOT ELECTED:**

Malcolm Hall Jr. — 97

Karen Armour — 84

Vin Burke — 81

Laurie Williamson — 75

Nanci Natale — 65

Although all of the candidates were invited to speak, only Joseph Hardison III got up to do so.

He criticized the town's spending on the Shuffle project, which moved the Darien Senior Center to the Town

Hall building annex (and moved Darien Public Schools headquarters to 35 Leroy Ave.), and criticized Koons for urging Republicans to vote against five RTC members in leadership positions.

Koons had earlier thanked the party, Hardison said, but now, months later, "I fail to see how [...] these people are targeted."

No one got up to dispute Hardison's comments. As Hardison himself said, "Everybody's probably made up their mind already."

It was the other side that was able to get more Republicans out to vote in their support. Once they won, the victory dancing was stifled in the room.