

MONDELLO ALLY MAY LEAD PARTY

Joseph Cairo likely to succeed Nassau GOP chairman named as ambassador

BY SCOTT EIDLER
scott.eidler@newsday.com

As longtime Nassau GOP chairman Joseph Mondello readies for Senate confirmation hearings for the ambassadorship to Trinidad and Tobago, his top lieutenant, Joseph Cairo, has emerged as a top prospect to succeed him.

But many on the county GOP committee, which Mondello has led since 1983, say it's nearly impossible to picture a future without Mondello. "It will be very difficult for anyone to fill his shoes," said former Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, a Republican.

"It's hard to imagine Nassau County without Joseph Mondello being the chairman," said Rep. Peter King (R-Seaford).

Mondello, 80, of Oyster Bay Cove, took over the county party after the conviction of his predecessor, the late Joseph Margiotta, for extortion and mail fraud. The party under Margiotta had gained a national reputation for "machine politics" that awarded public jobs to those who participated in local Republican clubs.

Mondello, originally of Levittown, continued the practice, ensuring that Republican turnout in local elections usually bested the Democrats'. He also served as state GOP chairman in the 2000s.

Mondello's successor will inherit a party that lost control of key

positions in last November's elections, when Democrats won races for Nassau County executive and Hempstead Town supervisor.

Democratic County Executive Laura Curran, in particular, ran on an anti-corruption platform.

In 2016, then-Oyster Bay Town Supervisor John Venditto was arrested on federal corruption charges, along with then-County Executive Edward Manganio and his wife, Linda.

Venditto and Edward Manganio are charged with conspiracy to commit federal program bribery and honest services wire fraud, and Manganio also faces an extortion charge and Venditto also is charged with securities fraud. Linda Manganio is charged with conspiracy to obstruct justice, obstruction of justice and making false statements to the FBI.

Their trial began last week at federal court in Central Islip. All have pleaded not guilty.

Mondello has "kept the party together during some tumultuous times, during Democratic land-slides," D'Amato said.

Cairo, 72, of North Valley Stream, in an interview spoke of his longtime friendship with Mondello, dating to the early 1970s. "Certainly, if and when the chairman leaves, I think I would be one of the people considered, perhaps together with others," Cairo said.

Other candidates who have

MORE ONLINE

Read Dan Janison's column on the ambassadorship.
newsday.com/columnists

been mentioned include former state Sen. Charles Fuschillo and former Hempstead Town Clerk Dan Fisher. Both in the past have said they were not interested.

GOP executive leaders have been called to a meeting Thursday, and told they should attend.

Top county Republicans described Cairo as a skilled campaign organizer who could help Republican candidates quickly secure petition signatures and motivate campaign volunteers. Cairo also is first vice chairman and president of Nassau Regional Off-Track Betting Corp.

"They call him the coach," said legislative Presiding Officer Richard Nicoletto (R-New Hyde Park). "In some of the campaigns, he inspired the type of enthusiasm with the workers as a coach does with his team." Cairo has "time and time again come to the rescue of the party," D'Amato said. "He's always been there, first on the battle line. He's been the strong right arm to Chairman Mondello."

Cairo has served as campaign manager to former state Sen. Jack Martins. The Republican, who lost to Curran in November, called Cairo "a person who certainly everyone in the party looks up to."

With Celeste Hadrick and Paul LaRocco



CHARLES ECKERT

Fire officials want Suffolk to preserve ban

BY RICK BRAND
rick.brand@newsday.com

Volunteer fire officials Tuesday pressed Suffolk lawmakers to preserve a ban on sparkler sales to protect youngsters from burn injuries despite a new state law that automatically makes such sales legal un-

less counties opt out.

The new law, which also permits ground displays known as firework fountains, loosens a 2015 law, which for the first time let counties outside New York City allow sparkler sales if counties vote to permit them.

Forty counties have voted to

allow sales, but Nassau and Suffolk have not.

"Despite their relatively benign appearance, sparklers can be extremely dangerous," said Eugene Perry, a veteran Patchogue fire official representing the Firemen's Association of the State of New York.

Perry said sparklers burn as

hot as 2,000 degrees — "as hot as a blow torch."

Industry officials downplayed the dangers, saying wood-handled sparklers allowed in New York are safer than those with metal handles. They said legal sales will bring in tax revenue and cut down on residents traveling out of state

for larger and more dangerous fireworks.

Vincent Szabo, regional manager for Phantom Fireworks of Youngstown, Ohio, said safety instructions are included in sparkler packages. He likened the heat created by a wood-handled sparkler to that of a match.

Firefighters said matches