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The GOP breaks bread together

BY CINDY FORREST
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United we stand, divided we fall. They may not have used those exact words but that was definitely the sentiment at the recent GOP Unity Breakfast held at the Holiday Inn on Route 46. The kickoff event for the fall campaign, in which three town council seats are up for grabs, called for unanimity in a party that over the years has been fractured by infighting, personality clashes and diverse agendas.

John Cesaro and Ann Grossi, Parsippany council members, planned the power breakfast in an attempt to bring the three Republican town council candidates together. "We're going in the right direction," Cesaro said. "What we need now is a show of solidarity."

Incumbent Michael dePierro, 68, is running for his seventh term on the council, while Jamie Barbe-

rio, 46, is seeking to regain the seat he gave up after his first term when he ran unsuccessfully for the Republican mayoral nomination. Former county freeholder and Sheriff John Fox, 64, who ran against Barberio and others for the mayoral nomination in 2005, rounds out the ticket. All three candidates attended the breakfast and offered their verbal affirmations.

"We're in this together to win this thing," said Barberio.

Party supporter Steve Roman looked around the breakfast table and remarked, "I'm looking at the face of the new Republican Party and it is such an impressive gathering of highly qualified people."

Altogether there are eight candidates for the three council seats, including three Democrats and two Independents. Susan Elbin, 52, David Comora, 45, and Milin Shah, 20, are running on the Democratic ticket confident that

the township is ready to take a new direction since there has not been a Democrat on the council for the past twenty years. Even the Republicans recognize that the times may be changing.

Vinnie Schindel leader of the Parsippany Republican Club, spoke about the influx of Democrats from New York moving into Morris County. "They're attracted to this area because of the quality of life we - the Republican party - have created then they vote Democratic and with it comes the higher taxes and everything they came here to get away from in the first place," he said.

The Independent ticket is a little more complicated. Roy Messmer, 52, is running for his first term on the council; however, he did run as an Independent in the hard-fought 2005 mayoral race. Messmer said that he made a conscious choice not to align himself with any party so that he has no obligation to any

group. While on the other hand, incumbent James Vigilante, 42, had been a Republican for his entire political life until earlier this year when he opted not to run in the crowded GOP primary.

Vigilante was surprised that he wasn't invited to the election event, yet Council President Rosemarie Agostini, who, Grossi said, was invited chose not to attend. Agostini, 67, lost her place on the GOP ticket in the June primary although her fight to overturn the 2005 mayoral election is still going strong. Arguments in the case regarding the 39-vote discrepancy in her fifth run for the mayor's office were presented again to the state Supreme Court last week.

Grossi opened up the event saying, "This unity breakfast for the Parsippany Council is a show of unconditional support and solidarity for our council candidates and to show support for the other Republican candidates who are

running for office." She stressed the importance of all Republicans to "circle the wagons and do what is necessary to ensure victory in November. The message is that this is a time for Parsippany Republicans to mobilize fully behind the candidates and that we support the entire ticket, not just one segment or one person. Unity is the new theme for the Parsippany Republican Party."

Present at the early morning gathering were Assemblymen Alex DeCroce and Joe Pennacchio along with assembly candidate Jay Webber, freeholder candidate James Murray and Parsippany party leaders Nicole Green and Schindel.

"It is a breath of fresh air this year," said DeCroce, "because we're all together this year."

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