

Zelinski Says Colton Dems Are "Running As A Team"

By LARRY ROBINSON

COLTON - One of three Democrats selected at their party caucus to run for office here in November suggests he is entering town politics to help improve the community's image and attitude.

"We'd like to lift the veil of negativism in Colton," said Democratic candidate for town council Joseph Zelinski.

In addition, the retired secondary school principal said he and other Democrats seeking office plan to launch a "more professional and aggressive" approach to grant writing, and develop a five-year plan for development and

other improvements throughout the town.

"We are basically running as a team," said Zelinski of the Democratic ticket.

Others nominated by the Colton Democrats to seek office this November include Kathryn Hayes for town council, incumbent town Councilwoman Joan Kilroy for supervisor and Tina Miller for town assessor.

The 61-year-old Zelinski retired as the Junior-Senior High School principal at Colton-Pierrepont Central School in 2001. Before coming to the Colton district he was also a principal at Edward-

Knox. He is also the father of four adult children who now reside in the states of California, Arizona, Connecticut and Maine.

He hails originally from the small rural town of Mineville in Essex County, and is proud of his blue-collar roots.

"My dad was a miner his whole life," said Zelinski. "He worked in the Iron ore mines."

Zelinski is hoping that his combination of blue collar heritage and white collar administrative experience will play well with voters in November in Colton, a town that has seen it's share of political

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infighting and surprises in recent months.

This past spring, longtime Conservative supervisor Hank Ford resigned unexpectedly from office during a hailstorm of criticism centering on allegations that he cut a secret deal with the state of New York and gave up town veto power over state land acquisitions in order to obtain a \$1 million community grant. Ford was also criticized for allegedly preferring to conduct town business away from public view, and for orchestrating

the firing of a well-known and long-serving town assessor.

After his resignation, Republican Deputy Supervisor Bill Swafford stepped in to fill the void. Swafford has already announced that he is seeking a full term in office in November.

Although pledging to build a more open and public-oriented town government, Swafford is now facing a challenge for the top elected job from two of his fellow board members, Republican Grace Hawley and Democrat Kilroy.

Kilroy has yet to comment publicly on why she is seeking

the supervisor's post in Colton, but Hawley has said she is looking to replace fellow Republican Swafford because she is unhappy with his job performance and does not like the direction he is taking the board.

Zelinski acknowledges that emotions can run high in Colton town politics, but is hoping that he and the rest of his party can stay above the fray.

"Some people have their own agendas," said Zelinski. "We are going to keep a clean campaign."