

# Re-entering public service

BY RICH PERKINS

I'd like to take this opportunity to re-introduce myself to the residents of Dutchess County Legislative District 7. I have been a lifelong resident of Hyde Park, a volunteer for youth sports, a two-term Town Board member and a Planning Board member. After careful consideration, I have decided to re-enter public service, seeking to become the next county legislator in District 7, representing over half of Hyde Park.

This position is currently held by Dan Kuffner. I thank Dan for his dedication and hard work and wish him well in his new ventures. Continuing the good work Dan has done is my goal, as well as to bring my perspectives on issues specific to Hyde Park to the county level.

My wife Bonnie and I have been married almost 38 years. We have had a wonderful full life in Hyde Park, raising our four children, Mathew, Michael, Meghan and Marc. Like Bonnie and me, they all attended and graduated from our public schools and went on to college. But our children, like so many raised here, had to move away for better employment. This makes me acutely aware of the limited job opportunities available compared to several decades ago. We need jobs that provide a living wage and a promise of additional future employment.

Much of my career and has been centered on servicing people's needs. While employed at IBM, where I worked for 27 years, I earned a bachelor of science in business from Regents College and my master's at Marist.

In 2005, I was appointed by a Republican administration to serve on the Hyde Park Planning Board. I served there proudly until appointed by the next administration (Democratic) to a suddenly open seat on the Town Board. I went on to serve two terms representing Ward 4. As a town councilman, I chaired or was a contributing member on committees to correct and improve our zoning and subdivision code.

My varied experience as a public servant gave me a greater understanding of and appreciation for the disastrous effects of the recent catastrophic flooding many residents in District 7 experienced. From being Town Board liaison to such special districts as Greenfields Water & Sewer, Quaker Hill Water, Dutchess Estates, and Molly's Way, plus serving on the inter-municipal committee for the Fall Kill Creek Watershed, I have considerable

knowledge and insight. I understand how important our watersheds are to the future of our property values. I will be a strong advocate for any project that improves our overall management of these issues.

Prior to entering public service, I spent 17 years assisting, coaching and managing Hyde Park baseball and CYO basketball. I used my communication and leadership skills to impart the fundamentals of the sports, along with sound moral judgment, good sportsmanship and responsibility.

I am running for the county Legislature knowing the many long-term economic challenges facing the county. Critical decisions must be faced that will affect each homeowner's tax burden. The current county executive has ignored for years an overcrowded jail that needs relief and repairs. Inmates are shipped at immense cost to facilities outside the county. If building a new jail is not the most cost-effective solution, then we need to look at retrofitting available space to service the different segments of the prison population that legally and morally require separation (for example, youths, women and psychiatric detainees). Enhanced alternatives to incarceration (ATI) need to be explored.

Another serious issue is the management of the county's solid waste by the Resource Recovery Agency. Funding has ballooned from the originally proposed zero-dollar cost ("it will pay for itself!") to over \$4 million per year. I promise to work diligently on these and other issues to benefit the residents of District 7 and all Hyde Park residents.

My valuable skill is communication. Listening to all sides of issues carefully is critical at the starting point. It has helped me build long-term friendships with residents, board members and county leadership, regardless of party affiliation. To ensure effective communications, I will listen carefully, study each issue and be willing to compromise to make progress. It is my intention to communicate regularly with all of my constituents.

Hyde Park has been and continues to be a wonderful place to live. But residents need strong advocacy at the county level. My experience, my work ethic and my knowledge of Hyde Park position me well to be your next Dutchess County Legislator for District 7. It will be my honor to serve and advocate for you.

*Rich Perkins is seeking election as Dutchess County Legislator for District 7. Learn more about his platform at [www.voterichperkins.com](http://www.voterichperkins.com). Reach the Hyde Park Democratic Committee at [hydeparkdems@gmail.com](mailto:hydeparkdems@gmail.com), or on Facebook at Hyde Park Democrats. Respond to this column at [editorial@thehudsonvalleynews.com](mailto:editorial@thehudsonvalleynews.com).*