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105th Airlift Wing

Schumer Pushes For New Squadron To Land At Stewart Air National Guard Base

WAMC, February 14, 2020 ::

U.S. Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer is urging the secretary of the Air Force to select Stewart Air National Guard base in Orange County as home for a new squadron.

Schumer, a Democrat met with Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett and Chief of Staff of the Air Force General David Goldfein on Wednesday. His goal was to make a final, in-person effort to secure Stewart Air National Guard Base in New Windsor as the home of the Air Force’s newest Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron (AES). Schumer says a decision on three finalists is expected next month. He contends that Stewart, which has a C-17 unit, has the right combination of operational, talent, location and cost advantages to conduct AES exercises.

New York’s junior U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand also has been pushing for Stewart to host the new squadron, as has Congressman Sean Patrick Maloney.


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106th Rescue Wing

Hampton Bays Students Honor A Local Military Hero

Patch West Hampton, Feb 18, 2020:

Hampton Bays High School students honored Senior Master Sergeant Erik S. Blom during a flag ceremony on Feb. 14. He is pictured with the middle school chorus and his children, Ryder, Sydney and Taylor.
Hampton Bays High School students honored Senior Master Sergeant Erik S. Blom during a flag ceremony on Feb. 14. He is pictured with the middle school chorus and his children, Ryder, Sydney and Taylor. (Courtesy Hampton Bays School District.) HAMPTON BAYS, NY — Hampton Bays students once again paid tribute a local hero.

The children raised an American flag high in honor throughout the month of February for Senior Master Sergeant Erik S. Blom, of Hampton Bays.

Blom was recognized at a ceremony on Feb. 14 at Hampton Bays Elementary School, where district middle school students read his biography and the middle school chorus performed. The event culminated with the raising of the flag on the school's flagpole, the district said.

Blom, school officials said, was born in 1975 in Nassau County, but soon moved upstate after his father retired from the U.S. Army Special Forces. He knew from an early age that he wanted to be involved with the military; as a junior at Gloversville High School, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and completed his basic training at Fort Benning, GA, during the summer before his senior year. He graduated high school in 1994, the district said.

At Fort Benning, Blom completed his airborne training and qualifications, and, in 1996, he completed the requirements for the Army Ranger badge and then, his medical training at Fort Bragg, NC. He was assigned to the 75th Ranger Regiment, again at Fort Benning, the district said.

Next, Blom decided to enlist in the New York Air National Guard; in 2000, he joined the Guard and was accepted for Air Force pararescue training, what some feel is one of the most difficult and dangerous jobs in the service. "It was a grueling 24-month training program that he completed in 18 months because of his prior training in the Army," the district said.

After his graduation in 2002, he was assigned to the 103rd Rescue Squadron in Westhampton Beach. Although Blom found his calling in the Air National Guard in March 2010, he changed his status from full-time to part-time, still participating in several U.S military operations overseas, including Northern Watch, a combined task force operation enforcing the no-fly zone in northern Iraq; Inherent Resolve, which was the military intervention against the Islamic State, or ISIS, in Syria and Iraq with the unit motto "one mission, many nations;" and the better known Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom campaigns, the district said.

Those assignments required that he participate both in combat and human operations in countries including Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey, Djibouti and Kenya.

"One of his proudest assignments was working with NASA on space shuttle launches," the district said in a release. "His assignment was to be on alert and ready to respond to space shuttle incidents anywhere in the world that required an immediate pararescue presence. It was a credit to his training and capability that NASA trusted him with such a sensitive and critical mission."
While stationed at the 103rd, Blom responded and saved lives in both the U.S. and the Caribbean in four separate hurricane incidents, the district added. "The devastation of Hurricanes Katrina, Sandy, Harvey and Irma would have been worse if not for Blom's pararescue skills."

He also participated in one of the longest search and rescue missions conducted by the 103rd. In 2018, he and his team were flown 1,500 miles into the Atlantic in an Air Force C-130 and saved the lives of two sailors on a container ship in distress. Recently, Esquire magazine printed a story about Blom and that operation, district officials added.

Amongst his 30 medals and ribbons includes recognition from the Army, Air Force and NATO. "The one he is most proud of is the Bronze Star with a 'V' device for valor in combat. In 2012, Blom was involved in a helicopter rescue in the middle of a firefight in Afghanistan, where he saved the lives of two American soldiers and a U.S. coalition partner," the district said.

Blom's wife, Emily, is from Marblehead, MA; they have three children, Ryder and Sydney, who attend Hampton Bays Elementary School, and Taylor, who will be in the district in a few years.

Blom is presently the pararescue team leader of the 106th operations group, referred to as the Guardian Angel Rescue Squadron, at Gabreski Airport.

When not actively involved in pararescue operations, Blom is a SWAT officer with the Suffolk County Police Emergency Service Unit, a member of their sniper team, and an FBI-certified firearms instructor. He is also completing his college education at Excelsior University and is an active member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

"The district is proud to honor Mr. Blom for his bravery and service to the United States," said Superintendent of Schools Lars Clemensen.


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109th Airlift Wing

Alaska National Guard’s Exercise Arctic Eagle 2020 begins

National Guard, Feb. 19, 2020:
JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska – About 900 Air and Army National Guard members from 15 states will participate in Exercise Arctic Eagle 2020 across Alaska Feb. 20 to March 7.

During the exercise, national, state and local agencies will conduct sustained operations in the extreme cold of Arctic environments.

“We must train effectively and efficiently to ensure we remain ready and prepared to respond to emergencies and disasters in support of our state and nation,” said Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard and commissioner for the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. “We provide a domestic military capability with unique skill sets to operate in extreme, cold-weather conditions.

Arctic Eagle 2020 consists of venue-based events at multiple locations, including Bethel and Quinhagak in Western Alaska; Deadhorse and Lake Teshekpuk in the North Slope Borough; the Combined Arms Training Facility, the Yukon Training Area, and Bassett Army Community Hospital on Fort Wainwright; near Fort Greely at the Donnelly Training Area; Eielson Air Force Base; the Joint Operations Center, Bryant Army Airfield, 673rd Air Base Wing Hospital, and Camp Carroll on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson; University of Fairbanks, Lynden Training Center, the North Star Borough, and the municipality of Fairbanks.

Training venues include Skiway operations, search and extraction, hazardous material detection and response, security and protection of critical infrastructure, triage, domain awareness patrol, communication and transportation support.

The goals of Arctic Eagle 2020 are to leverage federal training requirements to improve capability of National Guard units to execute civil support missions, to facilitate combat readiness training to improve federal lethality, to prompt partnerships to conduct multicomponent and multinational integration, and to incorporate innovation with operational test programs.

“We must train with the federal, state and local agencies who we would work with in response to a real-world scenario,” said Saxe. “It helps us to work through challenges, strengthen collaboration, hone our communications and tactics, and identify gaps for improvement.”


Other participants include military personnel from the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army Alaska, U.S. Army Reserves, U.S. Marine Corps; multinational participation from the 39th Canadian Brigade Group’s 440th Transportation Squadron, the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Mongolian Ministry of Defense and the Mongolian Armed Forces.; federal participation from the Department of Defense, Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States

Arctic Eagle 2020 is linked to the 103rd Civil Support Team’s Exercise Van Winkle 2020, North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command’s Exercise Arctic Edge 2020, the U.S. Navy’s ICEX 20, and Alaska Department of Health and Social Services’ Exercise Freeze Dried Ptarmigan. The exercises occur in February and March and are designed to integrate and strengthen an interoperable Arctic force.


369th Sustainment Brigade

Black History Month: The Harlem Hellfighters

My Guidon, February 20, 2020:

Each February, during Black History Month, the nation remembers the important contributions African-Americans have made throughout U.S. history.

The National Guard’s history is also replete with examples of African-Americans who served with distinction. A notable example existed within the three National Guard regiments that fought in World War I under the U.S. Army’s 93rd Division: the 369th, 370th and 372nd Infantry Regiments.

Although organized as an all-black division for the war, these regiments did not fight as one. Instead, each was assigned to French divisions, as the French were requesting the immediate use of American divisions to reinforce the French army. Each of the regiments took part in major combat operations and received battlefield accolades for their service with the French army.
Probably one of the most famous American units to emerge from World War I was the 369th Infantry, or “Harlem Hellfighters.”

Organized in the summer of 1916 as a result of state legislation authorizing the formation of a black National Guard regiment, the 15th Infantry, New York National Guard, was called into federal service in July 1917 and ordered to France. After three attempts crossing the Atlantic, the 15th landed in France in December 1917 and discovered it had been re-designated as the 369th Infantry Regiment. After being attached to the French army for training, it was assigned to the 161st Infantry Division of the French army.

The regiment took part in major operations in the Champagne-Marne, Meuse-Argonne, Champagne and Alsace campaigns — campaigns where front lines were retaken or German attacks were thwarted.

Overall, the regiment spent 191 days on the front-line trenches. For its actions, the 369th was cited 11 times for bravery and was decorated with the French Croix de Guerre with Silver Star for service during the Meuse-Argonne campaign.

In addition to having the unique distinction of receiving three nicknames: “Harlem Hellfighters,” “Men of Bronze,” and the “Black Watch,” the 369th’s regimental band was well known throughout Europe for its concerts and is credited with introducing American jazz to Europe.

Since World War I, the 369th underwent several reorganizations and is known today as New York National Guard’s Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 369th Sustainment Brigade.

https://www.myguidon.com/black-history-month-the-harlem-hellfighters/

53rd Troop Command

Army dad surprises daughter for Valentine's Day after returning from Afghanistan: Daniel London had just returned from Afghanistan when he surprised his daughter. (Soldier is a member of the 27th Finance Detachment, NYNG)

WABC News, February 14, 2020::
Feb 21, 2020

Alexus London, 10, was in gym class at William Rall Elementary School in Lindenhurst on Friday afternoon when her father, Army Staff Sergeant Daniel London, walked in carrying flowers.
Fifth grader Alexus London was in gym class doing push-ups when an unexpected Valentine's Day gift arrived.

Her father, Army Staff Sgt. Daniel London, had just returned from an eight-month deployment in Afghanistan before he surprised his 10-year-old daughter at William Rall Elementary School in Long Island, New York, with a bouquet of flowers.

Awestruck, Alexus ran across the room to hug and kiss her father.

London, returning from his third deployment, told WABC he'd missed his daughter's fifth and 10th birthdays.

When Alexus was 2, he and her mother, Rosemary London, had even been deployed for 15 months, according to WABC.

"She's very strong, and it's made her very resilient," Rosemary London told WABC.

She said that Alexus misses her father every day.

"We make sure to send him packages and take care of him when he's over there, so I know that she's very happy," Rosemary London said. "And the fact that it happened for her on Valentine's Day, this is something that her future husband. ... It's very hard to top."


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Airmen and Soldiers

Standish promoted

The Altamont Enterprise, February 18, 2020:

John Standish of Slingerlands, a member of the New York Army National Guard assigned to the Company D, 3-142nd Aviation, has received a promotion to the rank of first lieutenant.

https://altamontenterprise.com/02182020/standish-promoted

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We Salute You: Thomas Ciampolillo
WNYT, February 14, 2020:

News Channel 13 salutes Command Master Sergeant Thomas Ciampolillo of Glenville.

The Iraq war veteran has served in the Army National Guard and Navy – earning many accolades.

He also helped with security at NYC airports after 9/11, and is a retired Schenectady police detective.

Thank you for your service.

https://wnyt.com/military-veterans/we-salute-you-thomas-ciampolillo/5626048/?cat=13240

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National Guard promotes Farmington soldier

Monroe Post, February 20, 2020:

The New York Army National Guard recently promoted William Pulsifer, of Farmington, to the rank of staff sergeant.

Pulsifer is assigned to the Company A, 2-108th Infantry.

Army National Guard promotions are based on overall performance, attitude, leadership ability and development potential.

https://www.monroecopost.com/news/20200220/notable-names/1

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Military Museum

The Spanish-American War is the subject of a free talk at New York State Military Museum on Saturday, Feb. 22

Hudson Valley 360, Feb 19, 2020:

LATHAM — The story of a New York National Guard unit in the Spanish-American war, as remembered in the artwork of one of its Soldiers – Charles
Johnson Post--will be the subject of a free talk at the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs on Saturday, Feb. 22 at 2 p.m.

Local historical author Bill Howard, who has loaned his collection of Post’s art for a temporary exhibit at the museum, will be delivering the talk.

Post, who was born in 1873 and died in 1956, enlisted in the New York National Guard’s 71st Regiment when the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898. The talented artist brought his sketch books with him and drew what he saw during his service.

The 71st New York left Long Island City on May 13, 1898 and landed in Santiago, Cuba on June 23. The New York National Guardsmen took part in the attack on San Juan Hill on July 1, 1898 alongside the more famous Rough Riders and their deputy commander, Lt. Col. Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt.

The tropical fevers in Cuba caused more casualties than the Spanish and the 71st was sent back the United States in August 1898. Post was one of those who became ill – with either malaria or typhoid fever-but survived to go onto a career as a journalist and as an official with the New York City Department of Labor.

After retiring in 1946 Post turned his sketches from 1898 into oil paintings and he wrote his memoirs of his time as a Soldier. The book “The Little War of Private Post”, which included his artwork, was released in 1960.

Howard, a graduate of Manhattanville College and a Herbert H. Lehman Fellow at the University at Albany Graduate School of Public Affairs, will tell the story of the 71st New York at war using Post’s artwork.


The 71st Regiment organized in New York City in 1852 as part of New York State Militia. Prior to the Civil War the battalion saw duty in the “Dead Rabbit Riot” in 1857 in Manhattan and the “Quarantine Riots” on Staten Island in 1858.

In April 1861 the regiment was mobilized for 90 days’ service and sent to Washington as the Civil War broke out. The unit served in the First Battle of Bull Run before returning to New York. The 71st was later called up to serve in Washington DC’s defenses for 90 days and then for 30 days during the Gettysburg Campaign in 1863.
In 1898 the members of the 71st volunteered to serve as federal troops when America went to War with Spain. The 71st did not serve as a unit in World War I, although its Soldiers did, but did fight in Europe as part of the 44th Division in World War II.

The regiment was disbanded in 1993 when the New York National Guard was restructured.

The New York State Military Museum is located at 61 Lake Avenue on Saratoga Springs.


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**PFOA Issue**

**Newburgh City Officials Still Have Concerns About A Filtration System**

WAMC, Feb 14, 2020:

The New York state-funded water filtration system intended to alleviate the PFOS water woes in Newburgh has been up and running for some time, but not for its originally intended purpose.

The state funded a $25 million GAC, or granular-activated carbon, filtration system for Newburgh, following the revelation in 2016 that the city’s main drinking water source — Washington Lake — was contaminated with PFOS. Yet as the state readied testing of the system in early 2018, local elected officials and community activists grew wary. State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos.

“Well the plant’s operational,” says Seggos. “We are still working with the city to make sure that it gets online.”

The city has been drawing its drinking water from the Catskill Aqueduct except when the Aqueduct is offline for repairs, as was the case recently. Then Newburgh’s drinking water comes from Brown’s Pond, and Seggos says the GAC system filters water from there. Meantime, city councilor Ramona Monteverde says she’s still waiting for a DEC response to questions about the filtration system and PFAS chemicals posed in a letter a few years ago.

“Dead silence, that’s all we’ve gotten,” Monteverde says. “So, it would be great to have a sit-down and for them to respond to that letter, and to get some answers.”

Democratic state Senator James Skoufis, whose 39th District includes Newburgh, describes the situation as frustrating.
“I’ve been working with the governor’s office, DOH, DEC. It’s my understanding that the city council sent a number of concerns and questions in writing to the state — this is actually a number of years ago — and never got a response. And that’s really one of the lynchpins to this standoff is they sent all these inquiries up to the state and haven’t heard back, so, of course, we’re going to continue being concerned,” Skoufis says. “So I’ve been pushing, and I believe we’re going to be getting a formal set of answers to those questions from the city council in the near future. And, at that point, I hope that we can all begin to have a conversation about what the best way forward is.”

“I’ve been acting as a sort of intermediary to try and push the state,” Skoufis says. “And I think we’ve gotten them to a point where they’re actually about to send something back to the city council.”

A spokeswoman says DEC is finalizing its response to the city with the information it is seeking and in the meantime continues to pay for New York City water for the community as part of DEC’s ongoing response efforts. She adds that the agency continues to work closely with the Newburgh community, keeping residents apprised of DEC efforts, ensuring they continue to have clean drinking water, and addressing contamination related to the Stewart Air National Guard Base.

Newburgh city officials and area residents are not convinced the system could handle PFAS chemicals beyond PFOA and PFOS, though DEC officials have repeatedly said the system can filter both short- and long-chain perfluorinated chemicals. Monteverde believes otherwise:

“The issue is if we were ever to go back and they do the remediation and clean out Washington Lake, that that system, I believe, can’t detect the, what is it, short-chain PFAS,” Monteverde says. “That’s an issue.”

State Senator Skoufis:

“We need to rely on science,” says Skoufis. “If the science and any testing demonstrates that that filtration plant is safe, then I think we need to have a conversation about that.”

Again, Seggos:

“And our goal right now is to continue working with the administration, the local administration, on this to ensure that they understand how committed the state is to producing clean water for the residents of Newburgh. We’re confident in the system that we have built. We know that it can more than remove the chemical of concern, which is PFOS. And we’re working to ensure that the federal government is doing what it needs to do to keep more PFOS from getting into the system. I know they’ve made some investments in treatment at Rec Pond to keep stuff flowing off the site,” Seggos says. “But generally, I would say that I am glad they installed that system. I’m frustrated with the pace of their commitment, the scope of their commitment being narrowed and, while we’ve made these incredible
investments for the benefit of the community, I’m surprised that it’s taken the federal
government so long to come around, at this point.”

The Army Corps of Engineers has installed a temporary filtration system that is up and
running at the Recreation Pond outflow at Stewart Air National Guard Base, from where
some of the highest concentrations of PFOS emanate.

https://www.wamc.org/post/newburgh-city-officials-still-have-concerns-about-filtration-system

Veterans

NYS Budget Doesn’t Include Crucial Funding For Veterans

Hudson Valley Post, February 20, 2020:

No funding was included in Gov. Andrew Cuomo's budget proposal for a program that's
saving the lives of many New York veterans.

Around 20 veterans commit suicide each day. Over the past four years, the Department of
Veterans Affairs estimate on the number of veterans who take their own life has gone down
from 22 a day to 17.

However, military officials say the rate is actually higher because the latest Veterans Affairs
report removed servicemembers, as well as former National Guard and Reserve members who
were never federally activated, from its count, Stripes reports. According to the Military
Times, veterans are 1.5 times more likely to die from suicide than Americans who didn't
serve.

The Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer-to-Peer Support Program (Vet2Vet) started in 2012. It's
now available in 27 counties across New York, including a number of counties in the Hudson
Valley. Since the program started no veteran that has enrolled has committed suicide, officials
confirmed to Hudson Valley Post.

"It's completely unheard of it. It just shows how much this program is needed," Mental Health
America of Dutchess County Vet2Vet Program Manager Adam Roche told Hudson Valley
Post. "We help so many veterans from suicide situations from their complete lowest. We talk
to them. We talk them out of it. And now they aren't living they are thriving. That's what this
program provides."

While the program is crucial to veterans, it was left out of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Executive
Budget Proposal, according to Sue Serino, New York Senate District 41.
"Our program has played a major role for the veterans who need us. The governor isn't backing them up when they really need him. It's a shame for these men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice," Roche said. This program is vital for veterans."

The Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans Peer-to-Peer Support Program (Vet2Vet) was named for an Iraq War Veteran who lost his life as a result of his struggle with PTSD. The program was initially launched in 2012 in four New York counties. It uses a unique and confidential peer-to-peer counseling approach to empower veterans and their families and to create a local network of support for our servicemen and women. The program has been so successful it has expanded across the state.

“Vet2Vet saves lives,” Serino said. “That’s reason enough to ensure that it is funded by the state consistently. Our servicemen and women have made tremendous sacrifices for all of us, and they shouldn’t have to schlep up to Albany each and every year to fight for this critically important funding. This program works, and funding it should always be a top priority. I urge my colleagues to come together to not only fully fund the program, but to work towards expanding it statewide.”

Cuomo’s Executive Budget Proposal includes $5 million to help provide housing for homeless veterans and $1 million to support suicide prevention efforts among veterans and first responders, but no funding was expressly included to support the Dwyer Program," according to Serino.

“If the state has $5 million to dedicate to extending the state fair for a few days, we have the $4.4 million it would take to maintain and expand the Dwyer Program. I govern by listening and our veterans are telling us that the Dwyer Program is indispensable. These new programs will be great additions to the services we currently offer, but they cannot come at the expense of a program that we know is needed and successful," Serino said.

Vet2Vet is funded by the Joseph P. Dwyer Veterans’ Peer Services Project. Services for veterans include:

- Support groups
- Social activities
- Assistance in finding housing and/or employment for homeless veterans
- Advocacy for benefits
- Emotional support
- Educational information
- Referrals to useful services
Information around Support Groups, and Social Events

Short-term care management

"The VA hasn’t been attentive enough to help the veteran’s enough. This is just common sense. You are helping too many people. Helping people who served this country," Mental Health America of Dutchess County CEO Andrew O'Grady told Hudson Valley Post. "The Vet2Vet program engages veterans right away. It’s a great program. The numbers speak for themselves."

According to the governor's office, under this administration, New York has enacted the nation's largest fund for service-disabled veteran-owned businesses, certifying over 600 businesses to date; convened the State's first-ever Summit on Veterans and Military Families; launched the Justice for Heroes Initiative to fund legal clinics at law schools that provide assistance to veterans; provided funding for nonprofits that offer peer-to-peer support for veterans and their families; promoting the Ambassador Carl Spielvogel Fund to boost education opportunities for thousands of military students and their dependents at SUNY campuses and waived the application fee for veterans taking Civil Service exams. Governor Cuomo's efforts have made New York the most veteran-friendly state in America.

These programs are traditionally added by the Legislature each year during the budget process and included in the final enacted budget signed by the Governor. The Governor’s office has no opposition to including these programs in the final budget, as it has been included for the last several years.

"Political grandstanding and scare tactics like this are a disservice to New York’s veterans, and shame on those who use them instead of better understanding the budget process and working together to help these heroes. Governor Cuomo has been a champion for New York’s veterans, consistently advancing important initiatives to support their mental health, education, housing, business and overall quality of life. In his 2020 State of the State address, the Governor proposed expanding affordable housing to address veteran homelessness, investing in suicide prevention efforts, and providing free college courses to veterans; and last year, the Governor signed more than a dozen bills enhancing services and bolstering protections for veterans, Jason Conwall, spokesman for Gov. Cuomo, told Hudson Valley Post.”

Disclosure: Mental Health America of Dutchess County is a sponsor of the WPDH Vets Who Rock program. Hudson Valley Post and WPDH are both owned and operated by Townsquare Media of the Hudson Valley.

https://hudsonvalleypost.com/nys-budget-doesnt-include-crucial-funding-for-veterans/

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Waddington Town Supervisor Alex Hammond to challenge Assemblyman Walczyk in next election

North Country Now, February 18, 2020--:

POTDAM – Waddington Town Supervisor Alex Hammond, a Democrat, will challenge Republican Assemblyman Mark Walczyk for his 116th Assembly District seat.

Hammond is expected to announce his candidacy at 3 p.m. today at the Potsdam Civic Center.

Hammond was tied for the youngest town supervisor in the state when he was elected at age 21. Now 23, he is hoping to represent the North Country at the state level.

Hammond of Waddington is a strength manager in the New York Army National Guard. He graduated from Cornell University’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations after completing the ROTC Early Commissioning Program at Valley Forge Military College.

In addition to his work in local government and as a commissioned officer, Hammond is also the Waddington Democratic Chair.

Walczyk is seeking a second term after unseating long-time Assemblywoman Addie Jenne.


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