

District 32**Anton Konev**

By Melissa Hale-Spencer



Pictured above:

Anton Konev

GUILDERLAND — Anton Konev, making his first run for the Albany County Legislature, describes himself as a community activist.

He is running on the Republican line against four-term Democratic incumbent Mary Lou Connolly to represent District 32, which covers Guilderland along Route 20 from McKownville to Route 146 and from Guilderland Center to the New Scotland town line.

“I’m challenging the status quo,” he said of his reason for running.

Konev’s family emigrated to America from Russia a decade ago. Now 23, he came to Albany County to study at the University of Albany where he earned a bachelor’s degree in political science and is finishing up a master’s degree there, he said.

When he was living as a student in mid-town Albany, he was the victim of an attack in December of 2005, Konev said.

“I was put on hold when I called 911,” he said; the problem was “deciding who should respond.”

“As a community resident, I decided it was time for me to stand up,” said Konev. He founded a neighborhood crime-watch program that, he said, has helped “make sure law enforcement is more proactive.”

Having found his voice, he intends to use it.

Konev moved to Guilderland this summer, to Schoolhouse Road, and says, “I love it here.”

He is enrolled as a Democrat and planned to challenge Connolly in the Democratic primary but, when some of the signatures on his petition were challenged, he fell short of the needed number of names, said Konev.

Twenty-nine of the legislature’s current 39 members are Democrats.

“I’m certainly comfortable on the Republican line,” he said, naming the Republican values he upholds — reducing county government, cutting unnecessary taxes, and cutting down on waste in government.

“I do hold some Democratic views as well,” he said, stating this includes providing needed services, such as those for senior citizens.

Konev works for state Assemblyman Peter Rivera, a Democrat from the Bronx; as a senior legislative assistant, Konev works on policy and public relations, he said.

Winning an election, Konev said, should be about “who is more qualified” rather than the party line.

On the issues, Konev said, “Government waste starts with the county legislature. We have 39. The county of Nassau, with a population 10 times that of Albany County, has only 19... We pay all the county legislators over \$30,000 a year,” he said referring to the roughly \$20,000 salary and the \$10,000 to \$12,000 in health benefits. “Once you’re a legislator for two years, you get a lifetime of health benefits... It’s 50 percent of the salary,” he said, calling it “an unheard of benefit.”

“It really adds up,” he said. “Political patronage is very widespread in county jobs,” said Konev, stating workers should instead be hired based on merit.

The Albany convention center, he said “is a great idea” and the county should “play a big role.” But, he went on, “I’m questioning the way it’s being implemented... Costs keep on climbing up while the benefits are questionable. Who else but the taxpayers will have to bear the burden?”

Asked about the added 1-percent sales tax, which had originally been adopted as a temporary measure, Konev said, “We need to work towards reducing the tax burden on

the citizens and the businesses. Albany County is one of the highest taxed counties in the nation. Businesses are leaving the state.”

On the county level, Konev said, “We need to work with our state legislators...to reduce the tax burden...while keeping the services we need.”

Asked if the county should play a role in maintaining local farms, Konev said that a regional planning commission should be established, which would deal with issues ranging from traffic created by new development to maintaining farms. “There’s no traffic and development planning,” he said. “We need to think long-term.”

Asked about the county nursing home, Konev said, “We need to make sure we have efficient government.”

In 2005, the county legislature developed a plan for a new county nursing home with 450 beds but the next year the Berger Commission, put together by then-Governor George Pataki and the state legislature to evaluate health care in New York, recommended the Albany County Nursing Home and the Ann Lee Infirmary be rebuilt into a “unified facility,” and reduced by 345 beds. The county executive has declared a moratorium on accepting new applicants to the county’s nursing home and some residents are getting sent out of the county or even out of the state for care.

“We need to do it right for the long term,” said Konev, so taxpayers don’t bear the burden later.

If the size of the nursing home is cut down, he said, more home-care workers are needed, a field that is already understaffed.

“The solution is long-term established beds now with the possibility for growth...We need to have efficient management,” he concluded. “The Albany Nursing Home has been mismanaged.”

On shared services, Konev said, “Albany County has not been willing to look at consolidation.” He recommended a committee be established on the county level to study the issue.

“I can’t jump to conclusions and tell you what departments need to be consolidated,” he said. But, he went on, “Governor Spitzer realizes we have a problem of inefficient government and high taxes...If we continue resisting change,” he said, and don’t work on consolidation on a local level, “we will be forced by the state to accept a plan they devise. We, at the county level, need to think for ourselves.”