

## **Independent Wrests Berwyn from Democrats' Control**

**Author(s):** Scott Fornek **Date:** April 6, 2005 **Page:** 24 **Section:** News

With a federal investigation looming in the background, Berwyn's Regular Democrats lost their 36-year grip on power Tuesday as a former loyalist turned independent steamrolled the retiring mayor's hand-picked successor.

Former Democratic Ald. Michael O'Connor beat City Clerk Michael J. Woodward 57 percent to 36 percent with all the precincts tallied.

"We did stop the Machine," O'Connor said, moments before delivering his victory speech at the Skylite West banquet hall on Ogden Avenue. "We ditched the Machine. It's going to sit out in the field and rot.

"The people are in charge again."

'This is unbelievable'

Candidates running on O'Connor's Independent Voters of Berwyn slate won all but two of the remaining 10 city offices and all six Berwyn Township slots.

"It would be unprecedented for one organization to actually sweep another," O'Connor said. "This is historic. This is unbelievable."

About a block away, Woodward conceded defeat at Guadalajara restaurant and told reporters he did not know what went wrong.

"I feel disappointed, but we ran a hard campaign," Woodward said, "We did everything right in my opinion. We had a platform. We stuck to the issues. We ran a positive campaign."

Also vying for the mayor's seat were Ald. Ray Fron, 76, a 33-year veteran of Berwyn Democratic politics who ran as an independent and received 5 percent, and Berwyn Township Republican Committeeman Anthony Castrogiovanni, 43, who won just 3 percent.

But most of the focus of the race was on Woodward, 53, and O'Connor, 49, the only two mayoral hopefuls to field full slates of candidates for all the city offices on the ballot -- Woodward under the Democratic Party and O'Connor under the Independent Voters of Berwyn banner.

It was O'Connor's second run for mayor. Four years ago, he lost to Mayor Thomas Shaughnessy by 261 votes. Also head of the Berwyn Regular Democratic Organization, Shaughnessy, 79, endorsed Woodward.

But the race was complicated by a federal investigation into Berwyn government. Samuel "Sonny" Stillo, Shaughnessy's assistant mayor, is

charged with passing a \$500 bribe in an FBI sting.

O'Connor said the arrest validated anti-administration information he had been publishing in his newspaper, the Berwyn Independent.

'People started to believe in us'

I think people realized Mike O'Connor and the independents are telling the truth," O'Connor said as he savored his victory. "It went over the top, and people started to believe in us."

Woodward accused O'Connor of milking the scandal for votes and cast O'Connor, a former two-term alderman, as having played a role in many of the administration moves he criticized during the campaign.

But O'Connor portrayed Woodward as a puppet of the real power in the western suburb, Frank Marzullo, public safety director and a top deputy in the Democratic organization.

"I'm sure Frank Marzullo will turn in his retirement papers," O'Connor said "I won't have the privilege of asking him to leave."

## **Berwyn Chief Charged in Fight**

### **Beating allegedly tied to election that cost him his job**

**Author(s):** Scott Fornek **Date:** April 28, 2005 **Page:** 12 **Section:** News

Berwyn's top cop was indicted Wednesday on felony criminal charges accusing him and four other men of beating a 54-year-old former suburban official outside a restaurant and bar just hours after a mayoral election that cost the cop his job.

Berwyn Public Safety Director Frank Marzullo, his son, brother and two other men sent former North Riverside village manager Wayne Pesek to the hospital with "multiple bruises and contusions, broken facial bones, cracked ribs, concussions and injuries to his spine," according to Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan's office.

The aggravated battery and official misconduct charges against Marzullo came one day after Berwyn's city council agreed to pay him and three other departing officers thousands of dollars in back pay -- drawing protests from newly elected Mayor Michael O'Connor.

"I'm disappointed and disgusted that they would continue to defend him to the very end, knowing what kind of man he is," O'Connor said. "He is a person that has very little control of his temper and ran the police department as a tyrant and provided fear for everyone."

'Horrible role model'

"What happened on Election Night only puts us back in the quagmire of Frank Marzullo's reputation and dragging us through the mud," O'Connor said. "I'm disappointed that Frank was such a horrible role model to these young men."

Also charged with aggravated battery in connection with the April 5 incident outside the Golden Steer restaurant and bar in Forest Park were Marzullo's son, Jerry Marzullo, an assistant Cook County state's attorney; his brother, Russell Marzullo Sr., a Chicago city worker; Michael Fellows, a Berwyn police officer; and Charles Baugh.

The Cook County grand jury also indicted Russell Marzullo on one count of unlawful restraint. The charge was filed because he held back an onlooker trying to stop the beating, a source said.

Frank Marzullo's official misconduct charges stem from his interference

with Forest Park police officer's efforts to investigate the fight that night at the steakhouse at 7635 W. Roosevelt Rd., according to Madigan's office. One of the men police found standing over Pesek waved a badge at Forest Park officers and told them "I'm in charge here," according to the police report. Later, one of the men told the officers the Berwyn election held earlier that day would cost him his job.

"He said his group was upset about the loss and went to the Golden Steer," according to the police report. "He apologized for his behavior and said 'I made a mistake. It shouldn't have come to this.' "

'Out of control'

A top deputy in the Berwyn Regular Democratic Organization, Marzullo has long been a controversial figure.

Three years ago he was charged with two counts of misdemeanor battery after a brawl in a restaurant in southwest suburban Countryside. A Cook County judge later cleared Marzullo of the charges.

O'Connor said about six or seven years ago when he was an alderman, he drew Marzullo's ire by questioning a city payment made to clean the carpets at the Democratic headquarters.

"He had to be held back by two other aldermen and a department head," O'Connor said. "He actually tried to come over the conference table at me, and they had to hold him back. He was out of control then and is still out of control."

During the campaign to succeed retiring Mayor Thomas Shaughnessy, Marzullo was a major campaign issue. O'Connor and most of the other candidates questioned his annual salary of \$164,000 -- more than is paid to the top cops in either Chicago or New York.

'Nice bonus'

Marzullo handed in his resignation, effective Saturday, but questions about his pay continue. The Berwyn City Council voted Tuesday night to pay him for unused vacation time, sick days and compensatory time -- but officials disagree just how much.

Ald. Ray Fron, a failed mayoral candidate and one of three alderman who voted against the measure, puts the figure at \$71,465.

Ald. Robert Lovero voted in favor of the measure to give Marzullo his sizeable requested amount.

"A guy walking out and getting a \$70,000 check? C'mon," Fron said. "That's a nice bonus."

Ald. Ron Pechota, who voted for the measure, said Fron's numbers sounded right. But Pechota, who lost his aldermanic seat April 5, said they had no choice because the suburb's personnel policy requires them to

make such payments to employees when they leave.

"In my opinion, it was no special consideration for any of the four officers," Pechota said. "It's nothing new. It is something the city has been doing for the 13 years I was around."

City Clerk Michael J. Woodward, who had the support of Marzullo's Democratic organization in his own mayoral bid, agreed it was common practice, but insisted Marzullo and three other police officials leaving their jobs were only granted about \$11,000 each for the unused time.

"It is nothing out of the ordinary," Woodward said.

Ald. Nona Chapman, who cast a 'no' vote, said it's unclear whether they approved the \$79,893 that Marzullo originally requested or the \$71,465 that city auditors recommended.

"I'm not really sure what we voted on," Chapman said. "The motion was to go ahead and pay...I was livid with the pushing it through."

## **Berwyn Assistant Mayor Arrested on Bribery Charges**

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Berwyn's assistant mayor was arrested Tuesday for allegedly receiving and paying bribes, including a videotaped [payment](#) to another city official in the men's room at the Berwyn City Hall.

Samuel "Sonny" Stillo, 59, a former town alderman, was charged with "a pattern of racketeering activity," according to the [criminal](#) complaint filed by the U.S. [attorney's office](#).

Stillo was released after he agreed to put up the deed to his house to pay the \$200,000 bond set by U.S. Magistrate Judge Michael Mason.

U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, who called the allegations "offensive," said the arrest was part of a larger, ongoing investigation into illegal bidding and no-bid contracts approved by the Berwyn City Council. The FBI executed a search warrant at Berwyn City Hall on Tuesday, seizing documents and records, authorities said.

"People shouldn't pay bribes for City Council votes," Fitzgerald said.

He declined to say who else was under investigation but urged members of the public to come forward if they have additional information.

In Stillo's case, the charges involve two city-owned plots of land. In one, a development known as "Super Block" is slated for a block-long area involving several properties along Cermak Road and between Oak Park and Grove avenues.

According to an affidavit filed by FBI special agent Lyle Evans, Stillo first met with an unnamed council member during a meeting in January with another unnamed individual who wanted help buying the Super Block property.

Unbeknownst to Stillo, the council member at some point agreed to cooperate with the federal investigation.

Later, on Nov. 13, the night the council was to vote on who would develop the project, Stillo told the City Council member that he would pay him \$1,000 if he supported a certain developer. The council member put him off, asking the vote be postponed so he could check with his political supporters.

But Stillo still paid the council member \$500 in cash, the indictment alleges. The payment was videotaped in the men's restroom at City Hall.

"We had the cooperation of the witness in terms of recording what

happened," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Kaarina Salovaara. If convicted, Stillo faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Authorities would not comment on who else was being investigated, or whether the unnamed individual in the complaint would be charged. "The investigation is continuing," Fitzgerald said. Neither Stillo nor his attorney, Ed Wanderling, would comment after the hearing Tuesday. Berwyn mayor Thomas Shaughnessy did not return calls seeking comment.

**This Being Berwyn, it is not always easy to know the facts.**

**Author(s):** Carol Marin

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Ugly elections link Berwyn and the Balkans.

Berwyn is far from the Balkans so it might not be fair to compare an election in a western suburb of Chicago to post-war Kosovo. Then again, Scott Waguespack has worked on campaigns in both places and says he now believes Berwyn is closer to the Balkans than he ever dreamed. I'll come back to his story.

But first, in case you didn't know, there's a mayor's race going on in Berwyn and it isn't pretty.

Four men are vying for retiring Mayor Thomas Shaughnessy's job in the April 5<sup>th</sup> General election.

Shaughnessy, 79, is calling it quits. No wonder. The feds have been crawling all over city hall since January of last year seizing records and indicting his former deputy mayor, Samuel "Sonny" Stillo, on racketeering charges. A former alderman, Alex Bojovic, actually worked undercover for the FBI, wore a wire, pretended to be corrupt and allegedly caught Stillo on tape offering him a \$500 bribe to throw his vote behind a sweet deal for an unnamed developer.

Bojovic, a "reformer," had dreams of replacing Shaughnessy so he ran in the February Democratic primary. What he quickly learned the hard way is that it's a lot easier to do cloak and dagger work for the feds than it is to go up against the Democratic machine in Berwyn. Even though the U.S. attorney's office sang Bojovic's praises, the opposition savaged him, portrayed him as a wife-beater and former juvenile delinquent, and he was toast.

He lost to Michael Woodward, the city clerk of Berwyn, who has the blessing of the departing mayor, not to mention healthy campaign contributions from guys who make very big bucks "consulting" for municipal governments, people like lobbyist Al Ronan and attorney Ed Vrdolyak.

But Woodward's real ace in the hole is Frank Marzullo. Marzullo is the public safety director of Berwyn in charge of the fire and police departments. Marzullo, one of the highest paid law enforcement officials in the nation at \$167,000 a year, got his start in politics years ago under the tutelage of the late, legendary 25th Ward Chicago Ald. Vito Marzullo (no relation). He left Chicago for Berwyn 30 years ago.

All of which takes me back to Scott Waguespack and why he thinks elections in Berwyn bear an eerie resemblance to battlegrounds like the Balkans.

Waguespack is the campaign manager for another of the candidates running for mayor, Michael O'Connor. Last Sunday, he says three of his election workers were pulled over by Berwyn police, arrested, handcuffed, had their van impounded, their signs confiscated, and were locked in holding cells for five hours until they could post bond.

Waguespack says he counted seven squad cars at one point. Meanwhile, he says, while he was trying to get his guys out of jail, an unmarked vehicle was seen sitting outside one of O'Connor's campaign events with someone taking photos of supporters going in.

Both police boss Marzullo and the Democratic candidate he has endorsed, Woodward, say that's just nonsense. Woodward told me O'Connor is doing nothing but running a "negative campaign."

When I visited the police department in Berwyn Thursday, Marzullo said flatly that O'Connor's people were out breaking the law, tearing down Woodward signs and damaging property. As for O'Connor himself, Marzullo declared, "He has no issues but to go after me. He's got a vendetta." This being Berwyn, sister city to Cicero, it is not always easy to know the facts. But I can tell you something I do know for sure. It has to do with money. Taxpayer money.

Berwyn is a town, after all, of a lot of decent people who work hard and don't make much money. A family of four earns just under \$44,000 a year. Do they know how their tax money is being spent? Absolutely not. Why not? Because Berwyn officials don't bother much with audits. The 2002 audit wasn't done until September of 2004. There is still no 2003 audit. No work under way on 2004.

If I was running for mayor of Berwyn and I knew the feds were looking at my city's books with a microscope, I'd be on a big bandwagon to know all about the finances of my town.

Woodward, the Democrat, says talk of corruption in Berwyn is "negative." So I asked him about city finances. He drew a blank. What's Berwyn's bonded indebtedness? He wasn't sure. What are its principal revenue

streams? He'd have to check.

Republican Anthony Castrogiovanni and independent Ray Fron were able to offer a few specifics but not many.

Only O'Connor, also an independent, managed to answer immediately and in detail. And only he expressed outrage at the missing audits.

In Berwyn, they call that "negative."

## Hispanic Clout Dukes it out in Berwyn

### One political race is often prologue to another

**Author(s):** Carol Marin

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Since most of us don't live in Berwyn (just 54,000 people do), it would be easy to ignore any news of the upcoming April 5 mayoral election there. Who cares about some local race in a place where you don't live? Believe it or not, I in Chicago and you, wherever you live, actually do have a little stake in Berwyn. That's because that small western suburb is shaping up to be an important battleground in the political tug of war between so-called "reformers" and "regulars." And it is becoming more and more important when it comes to the growing clout of the Hispanic vote. Today, for instance, Chicago Ald. Ricardo Munoz of the 22nd Ward will declare his support for mayoral candidate Michael O'Connor. State Sen. Martin Sandoval (D-Cicero) has already given his backing to another candidate, Michael Woodward. Woodward and O'Connor are considered the two front-runners in a classic Berwyn brawl. And to the extent that either of these terms are meaningful, Woodward, a Democrat, represents the "regulars" in this race, with support from the aged, outgoing mayor Thomas Shaughnessy as well as a veritable who's who of Illinois politics: lobbyist Al Ronan, powerbroker Ed Vrdolyak, Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.) and former Congressman Bill Lipinski. O'Connor, meanwhile, casts himself as the "reformer" in this race. He is a lifelong Democrat running on an independent ticket. Four years ago he ran against Shaughnessy and only lost by a narrow margin. O'Connor's campaign does not boast a long list of marquee political players as Woodward's does.

What will be important for each man come April 5 is the kind of Hispanic support that comes his way. Berwyn, like Cicero and Melrose Park, has a

growing Hispanic population. As of 2002, 38 percent of its residents were Latino.

Enter Marty Sandoval and Rick Munoz. Like Woodward and O'Connor, there is little love lost between these two. And because one political race is often prologue to another, it's good to remember what's at stake here beyond everyone's stated desire for "good government" (to the extent that term is meaningful). I'm talking about next year's legislative races.

Though Munoz was appointed by Mayor Daley to the Chicago City Council in 1993, he is one of a tiny group of aldermen willing from time to time to oppose Daley on anything.

That "disloyalty" has caused him some difficulty. In the last three aldermanic elections, the powerful Hispanic Democratic Organization has put in a candidate to oppose him. HDO is, of course, the brainchild of one of Daley's most potent political operatives, Victor Reyes, who runs it. Until 2003, Munoz supported Sandoval, most recently when he ran for state Senate a year earlier. But that support ended when Sandoval and HDO backed Ray Diaz in Munoz's last aldermanic contest.

"Marty Sandoval is a wholly owned subsidiary and creation of HDO," says Munoz. "And HDO has been an obstructionist to political empowerment on the Southwest Side."

Munoz, whose Little Village ward is a near neighbor to Berwyn, says he is now considering the possibility of running against Sandoval for state Senate next year. Berwyn is part of Sandoval's district. Each man, therefore, has a stake in this mayor's race.

Sandoval, when I reached him in Springfield Thursday, said the possibility of Munoz running against him "catches me cold."

Sandoval, unlike Munoz, has the strong support of Mayor Daley, whom he considers his political mentor. Daley, he says, "may be an even greater mayor than his father."

So what would Sandoval think of Rick Munoz making a state Senate bid against him in 2006?

"I have the support of Mike Madigan, Ed Burke and Berwyn's Thomas Shaughnessy and Mike Woodward," he said. "I assume I'll have the support of Rick Munoz."

Never assume.

Just ask state Rep. Frank Aguilar, who in November was sucker punched by Michele Chavez, the ghost candidate he helped recruit. It was the Berwyn vote that made the difference.

Or ask Cicero town president Ramiro Gonzalez, who was deposed just last month by a former fellow hack, Larry Dominick. By Cicero standards, that

was practically a revolution.

Long-standing suburban "political machines," to the extent even that term is meaningful, have taken a few hits lately. And voters have come across with a few surprises.

That's why the Berwyn race isn't just about Berwyn.