

In Longshot Bid, Republican Derrick Sinon Seeks to Shake Things Up as He Vies for Seat on Rhinebeck Village Board

March 04, 2024

By Andrew Checchia

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Republican Derrick Sinon, 29, hopes to galvanize Rhinebeck voters in the Village Board election (photo by Andrew Checchia).

A 98-year-old is using his walker to get around at home. It slips out from under him and he can't get up. His wife calls 911 and an ambulance arrives. Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) ease the man from the floor. No bones are broken and there's no lasting damage.

That could be the end of the story, but one of those EMTs, Derrick Sinon, sees such work as an opportunity to do something proactive. He takes the time to talk with the man and his wife about going to the doctor. The man's primary care physician just left his practice, so Sinon helps arrange a checkup appointment with a new doctor before something goes seriously wrong.

"Who knows when he would've gone to the doctor?" Sinon said in an interview with *The Daily Catch*. "Before there's a real problem, we can talk to him and see what's going on. It's a proactive approach."

With his background as an EMT, a volunteer firefighter, and a security guard, Sinon is applying this proactive approach to his Republican campaign to earn a seat on the Rhinebeck Village Board of Trustees. His candidacy marks the first challenge from the party in five years, in a longshot bid that he says is more about improving the political health of the community than winning the race.

“I don’t personally care if [residents] vote for me; I care that they vote,” Sinon said in the interview last month. “If everyone wants the two Democratic candidates, great. All I’ve done is empower them to get out and vote. I’ll have educated people and stimulated conversation and thought.”



Sinon has worked as an EMT with Rhinebeck Fire and Rescue for several years (photo from Facebook).

After Sinon expressed some interest in public service—“at first an on-the-whim decision,” he said—Rhinebeck Republican Committee Chair Frank Intervallo tapped him at one of the committee’s monthly meetings at the American Legion Hall to run in this month’s election, to be held in two weeks. Sinon was formally nominated at the group’s caucus in January (Read our [coverage](#)).

Registered Republicans are massively outnumbered in the village, with just 17 percent of voters registered with the party, according to voter registration data from 2023. That compares to 56 percent registered as Democratic and 22 percent declaring “no party,” the former designation for Independents.

“I think a lot of people are enthusiastic to hear that we have a candidate,” said Intervallo, who was recently appointed treasurer of the Dutchess County Republican Committee. “People are anxious for some kind of change here.”

At 29, Sinon offers a young voice with views that don’t square neatly with either party line, he said, and he believes his challenge will be a productive one to reinvigorate a one-sided political landscape.

Sinon, who is not married, was born in Rhinebeck but has lived around the state, growing up in Hyde Park, before moving to the Adirondacks after 9/11, then to Poughkeepsie, to Wappingers, and briefly to New York City. He left the city for Red Hook during the Covid pandemic to care for his ailing mother, and in 2022, he moved back to the Village of Rhinebeck, where he now lives with his sister.

He has worked as a security guard locally, including at Northern Dutchess Hospital, and has been a manager with security contractor company Allied Universal, working up to an Acting Director of Security role at the Poughkeepsie Galleria. While in Poughkeepsie, he attended Dutchess Community College, although he did not earn a degree.

He also spends significant time volunteering and working with local municipalities as a firefighter and EMT. He got his start with the volunteer fire department in New Hamburg in 2015, and, after a hiatus while living in New York City, which operates professional fire departments, he signed up with departments in Rhinebeck and Beacon after moving back. In a paid position, he also works for private EMS company Empress.

He said that the volunteer work and his management experience with security companies qualify him to manage local government affairs. And his experience on the frontlines of emergency services and healthcare inform many of his political opinions, particularly ones that depart from national Republican talking points. For instance, he said he is in favor of universal healthcare and is pro-choice.

“At the local level, I don’t think party matters at all,” he said. “I don’t look at the party. I look at the politics.”

Then, why is he a Republican?



Among the two candidates Sinon will face is incumbent Vanessa Bertozzi (photo by Andrew Chechia).

“I just chose it at 18,” he joked at first, but while he said the party aligned with his views more closely when he was younger, he said that today he likes challenging the notion of what it means to be a Republican. “I’m sort of at the fringe of the party nowadays,” he added. “It’s almost like an act of defiance to remain a Republican.”

This provocative stance, said Sinon, is a central tenet of his campaign, which he said is much more about local engagement than national party politics, which he said don’t have much impact on local issues. This is an argument that was broached, under different circumstances during the Democratic primary for Village Board candidates, in which incumbent John Penney was defeated after arguing that his donations to Republican candidates were irrelevant to his candidacy as a Democrat (Read our [coverage](#)).

Sinon was involved in last November’s county races, during which he campaigned for Republican candidates like County Executive Sue Serino, knocking on doors around the village. Many residents, he said, would shut their doors in his face as soon as he said the word “Republican.”

Sinon said he was frustrated by this knee-jerk response, and he was concerned about the controversy over Trustee John Penney’s donations to Republican candidates that elicited attacks about his authenticity as a Democrat, mostly leveled by Eleanor Pupko, during January’s Democratic primary for the trustee nominations. Penney ultimately lost to Pupko and incumbent trustee Vanessa Bertozzi (Read our [coverage](#)).

That kind of discourse isn’t healthy for local civic and intellectual engagement, said Sinon. “There’s a lot of unrest in the village, even among the Democrats themselves,” added Intervallo. “Hopefully that will turn into some action.”



Sinon says he's running not so much to win as to shake up the field of candidates (photo by Andrew Checchia).

Sinon's campaign has been centered on talking to voters, mostly friends and friends of friends, he said. He added that the opinions he learned from these face-to-face interactions would inform his positions, if he is elected. At the time of his interview with *The Daily Catch*, he said he was keeping his platform vague, a kind of vessel for the public to dictate. "The big thing is collating data," he added. "It's about getting to know what the majority of the people want and feel."

But the logistical side of Sinon's campaign has been slow-moving. He said he hadn't knocked on as many doors as he would have liked, and Intervallo said some of the yard signs went missing soon after the committee placed them around the village this week, though he said he did not know details.

"The big thing is just talking to people, breaking down a lack of information," said Sinon. "If everyone says a Republican is a 'Republican,' that's not true. If I can just challenge beliefs that we're different people and every different person has different ideas, they can make their own decisions based on that."

Voters will choose between Sinon and the two Democratic candidates, Pupko and Bertozzi, on Tuesday, March 19, and the two candidates with the greatest number of votes will fill the open seats. Whether he wins or loses, said Sinon, he hopes his proactive campaign will cement his message of political engagement and open-mindedness in the village.

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One response to "In Longshot Bid, Republican Derrick Sinon Seeks to Shake Things Up as He Vies for Seat on Rhinebeck Village Board"

1.  *Richard Gilbert* says:

[03/04/2024 at 7:42 pm](#)

Along with supporting Vanessa Bertozzi, Rhinebeck Democrats have an unusual opportunity to bring a welcome new voice and a bit of balance to the Village Board on the March 19. Good luck, new-comer Derrick and Vanessa.