

To: GS LA
From: Richard Giardino, Candidate for Fulton County Sheriff
Re: Position on return of Boat Patrols to the Great Sacandaga Lake
Date: September 22, 2015

The Fulton-Montgomery Counties Regional Chamber of Commerce has spent tens of thousands of dollars promoting tourism in Fulton County with a major emphasis on our 44 lakes. Two recent slogans have been "Fulton County: 44 lakes, 44 choices"; and "Fulton County: Forty-four lakes; Come jump in our lakes". It just makes sense that we provide boat patrols to assist those using our lakes to have a good time safely and be assured that the Sheriff's boat patrol is available to assist them when needed. Thousands of individuals and families use all of our lakes, especially the Sacandaga for fishing, recreational boating, sail boating, kayaking, water skiing and swimming. In recent years we have had several nationally recognized fishing contests which have brought fisherman and tourists from over a dozen states.

In recent years we have had several accidents on the lake, several stranded boaters and at least three drownings. A total of five drownings in Fulton County in the past 3 years. As a child growing up I remember when we had four Sheriff's boats; one on Green and Canada lakes, one on East and West Caroga lakes, and two on the Sacandaga.

The mission of the boat patrol will be to assist boaters and other users of the lakes who need assistance; to provide educational information on the Navigation Law requirements and give boaters an opportunity to bring their boats into compliance voluntarily; to assist fire departments and other emergency service providers with jurisdiction over the lakes; and to provide a presence to deter reckless conduct on the lakes thereby allowing all users to enjoy the lake to its fullest without unnecessary interference.

We currently have two Sheriff's patrol boats in cold-storage. One of my goals will be to restore the Sheriff's Boat Patrol with at least one boat on the Sacandaga starting on weekends from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The emphasis will be on assisting boaters and other users of the lake to insure that everyone can enjoy the lake safely and have available assistance when needed from the Sheriff's Department. I would return the complimentary voluntary safety checks. Boaters would be given a list of required items and if they didn't have them they would be given time to obtain the necessary items. In the long term I would strive to reactivate the former dive team, for search and rescue.

An additional benefit of having a boat patrol would be to retain younger deputies who often seek positions with other agencies for higher pay. Since most municipal agencies do not have a boat patrol, it is one type of unit that would encourage officers to remain with the Sheriff's Office.

The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation refunds operating, capital and personnel expenses at 50%. I would seek donations by both holding a variety of functions and directly applying to organizations and businesses for 50% of the boat budget and 50% from the County. Understanding that the 50% from the County would be refunded by the State. There would be no cost to the local taxpayers. I anticipate the initial cost for the first year would be between \$25-30,000, total, since the largest expense, the boats, already exist.

If elected I would gladly accept any assistance the GS LA or its members could give the Sheriff's Department in restoring this valuable service.