

Press Release Press Release Press Release



TOM CILMI
Suffolk County Legislator
10th District

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Republican Legislators Vote No on Police Commissioner Appointment

At a meeting of the Suffolk County Legislature today, Republican Legislators Cilmi, Trotta, McCaffrey and Kennedy again expressed concerns about the lack of process behind the appointment of Police Commissioner Timothy Sini. Sini's appointment was confirmed despite opposition from Cilmi, Trotta and McCaffrey. Legislator Kennedy abstained.

Sini's appointment comes on the heels of the retirement of former Commissioner Webber and former Chief of Police James Burke who is in federal prison awaiting trial on a number of charges. A federal investigation into departmental corruption is ongoing.

It also comes just three months after Mr. Sini lost a hotly contested legislative race against first-term incumbent Kevin McCaffrey. Sini, a Democrat, was supported by Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone and Suffolk Democratic Chairman Richard Schaffer. He is now Bellone's pick for Police Commissioner.

Legislator Tom Cilmi said his objections have less to do with Sini and more to do with the process. He said, "Four years ago, prior to any controversy, County Executive Bellone appointed Chief Burke and then commenced a nationwide search for his new police commissioner. He set forth a number of specific criteria designed to attract only the most qualified candidates. Fast forward to today, we have a Police Department and apparently a District Attorney's office under investigation. We have Bellone's hand-picked Police Chief in jail. And we have another hand-picked individual, Mr. Sini, being appointed without having done any search and without setting forth any criteria. Yet, we're being asked to support his appointment despite the fact that he has no Police Department experience. I have supported most of the County Executive's appointments, but given the circumstances, I cannot in good conscience support this one."

Legislator Rob Trotta, a retired police officer and frequent critic of Bellone, said, "This is clearly a political appointment. Sini was Bellone's Deputy County Executive for Public Safety for a year and a half. He should have known what was going on in his Police Department. He had a responsibility to the taxpayers to have gotten to the bottom of the allegations against Burke and to address what Judge Wexler called a culture of corruption in the Department. He may end up being a great police commissioner, but I still have serious questions about what happened under his watch."

Last week the Legislature's Public Safety Committee effectively killed a bill, sponsored by Trotta, that would have created a bipartisan committee to explore the reasons for what he called an "embarrassing lack of oversight" in the Suffolk County Police Department, but the bill failed with Republicans Cilmi and Kennedy supporting the bill and all Democrats voting against it.

"Their lack of willingness to get to the bottom of what happened is telling," Trotta said, "and if nothing else, it gives me even greater cause for concern."

Kevin McCaffrey, the Republican Minority Leader said, "Mr. Sini may ultimately be the best person for the job but knowing what we now know, and recognizing there are things we still don't know, making an appointment to such an important position at such a critical juncture in the County's history, without any search and without any objective criteria whatsoever, is completely irresponsible. To me it looks like you lose an election and get a better County job."

Legislator Kennedy agreed that the lack of process was troubling. She said, "While Mr. Sini has an excellent resume and appears eager to run the department efficiently, in light of prior accusations and issues with the P.D., I believe that we would be remiss not to perform a national search. The people continue to doubt the SCPD's integrity and need to see that all doors were opened in a search for leadership. There is no room for politics when a great department has been unjustly painted with a broad brush."

Despite their opposition to Sini's appointment, the four Republican legislators said they are ready to work with Commissioner Sini moving forward. "This was never personal," said McCaffrey, "it is always about good government. The residents of this County elect us to be watchdogs, but they also expect us to ensure the highest level of service delivery possible. We look forward to working with Commissioner Sini to address the myriad of public safety concerns in our districts."

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