

Democrats Urge Hanft for Family Court

Rensselaer County Democrats have forwarded the name of longtime city attorney Richard Hanft for consideration to fill the empty seat on Family Court.

“I’m satisfied with the screening committee’s recommendation and I’m confident he will be rated ‘very well qualified’ by the governor’s judicial screening panel,” said county Chairman Tom Wade.

The seat became vacant when Judge Linda Griffin retired earlier this year. Should Hanft be nominated by Gov. David Paterson, and confirmed by the state Senate, he would have to run for a full 10-year-term in November.

“I’m very pleased, I’m very gratified,” said Hanft. “I’m hopeful I will be following in the footsteps of fantastic Family Court judges like Judge Spain and Judge Griffin and Judge Hummel.”

The party’s screening committee interviewed candidates and made their recommendation to the Wade who brought Hanft’s name to the Executive Committee. It’s unclear when the governor will make his recommendation to the Senate or if he will at all.

Conceivably the seat could remain vacant through the end of the year when November’s winner will take the bench.

Another longtime Troy attorney, Beth Walsh, a former city councilwoman, also wanted the position. She couldn’t be reached for comment Wednesday night.

Hanft, is of counsel to the Albany law firm Tully Rinckey and before that had his own office in Troy. He served as president of the Rensselaer County Bar Association and in a number of municipal positions including Troy corporation counsel and counsel to the minority and majority on the county Legislature.

He has extensive experience working in family court as evidenced by him serving as a certified law guardian to the Rensselaer County Family Court and the Appellate Division Third Department since 1973.

On the Republican side of the aisle, Troy attorney Arthur Dunn wants to run for the position in November.