

# Bellone talks business down Port

## Democratic county executive candidate meets with village business owners

BY SUSAN RISOLI

*srisoli@tbrnewspapers.com*

Steve Bellone, Democratic candidate for Suffolk County executive, took a campaign swing through Port Jefferson last Thursday and talked to local business owners about revitalizing the county's downtowns.

Bellone, currently Babylon Town supervisor, was joined by Brookhaven Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld, running for re-election, and Kara Hahn, the Democratic, Independent and Working Families candidate for the county's 5th Legislative District seat.

The candidates stopped in four preselected businesses whose owners and managers gave tours, showing off improvements, offerings and decor.

The executive hopeful stopped in to see George Wallace, owner of the Port Jefferson Frigate; Stewart Weiner, executive director and general manager of Danfords Hotel & Marina; Terry Scarlatos, Toast's owner; and Tom Schafer, who owns Tommy's Place and the newly opened Schafer's restaurant. Schafer is president of the Port Jefferson Business Improvement District.

Weiner told Bellone that "sometimes mid-Suffolk gets forgotten about" in contrast to Long Island's north and south shores. He advised Bellone to think about installing attractive, visible signs saying "Welcome to Suffolk County" on highways and creating a staffed welcome center where visitors could pick up information and ask questions.

In a telephone interview a few days later, Weiner said

"Suffolk County needs to do something to promote Suffolk County" and a county executive could help that effort. Even Long Island's residents "from the South Shore, or from deep into Nassau" aren't aware of Suffolk's attractions, he said.

During his tour, Bellone, who pointed out that Port Jefferson's downtown "is growing," said as county executive he would "keep economic focus in the [region's] downtowns." He urged communities to craft plans to attract and keep business. Under his leadership the county would "invest the resources to help them improve those plans" as long as they "are helping the county meet the big regional challenges that we face," he said. Bellone also called for reform of county government "so it's much more business-friendly."

Bellone's Republican opponent, Suffolk County Treasurer Angie Carpenter, stands for "government getting out of the way" when it comes to fostering a business-friendly climate, her campaign manager, Rick Belyea, said. "If there was a wand to be waved over the years and it wasn't, then shame on us," he said. "But the county can't be a lone beacon." Rather, he said, the county, towns and villages have to work together, especially when it comes to permitting processes for businesses.

Commenting on business concerns specific to Port Jefferson, Weiner said he'd like to see additional parking spots created in the Village and the "no-pay" parking meter season extended from Oct. 15 through May 1.