

Sinatra's Hoboken Picks Zimmer as First Female Mayor (Update2)

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By Peter S. Green



Nov. 4 (Bloomberg) -- Voters in Hoboken, New Jersey, whose 32-year-old mayor resigned in July after his arrest on corruption charges, chose Acting Mayor **Dawn Zimmer** to complete the term.

Zimmer, 41, won with 43 percent of the vote, or 5,278 ballots cast, besting Elizabeth Mason, who took 23 percent of the **vote**, and two other women in a seven-candidate, non-partisan election in the town where singer **Frank Sinatra** was born. She becomes the first elected female mayor in the 168-year history of Hudson County, according to the **PolitickerNJ.com** Web site.

Zimmer, a Democrat, lost a mayoral race by 161 votes in June to **Peter Cammarano**, then replaced him when he was arrested July 23 on charges he took formant and promised to sponsor zoning changes for a high-rise development. The arrest was part of a statewide sweep of local officials by Republican **Christopher Christie**, the federal prosecutor who last night was elected New Jersey's governor.

"She probably wouldn't have been able to get into office if somebody who was breaking the law had not been identified and indicted," said **Ingrid Reed**, director of the New Jersey Project at Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute of Politics in New Brunswick.

With the arrest of Cammarano, Reed said, "the Hoboken political organization is immobilized as it tries to figure out what to do next."

Cammarano has said he is innocent and will fight the charges. He has yet to enter a plea, said **Michael Drewniak**, a spokesman for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Newark.

'Not Tied'

In an interview today, Zimmer said she'd spent the least of any leading candidate in the race, about \$150,000, and had eschewed television commercials.

"I'm not tied into anyone," she said. "People from the county haven't funded my campaign."

Zimmer said she was surprised to be told she was the first woman elected mayor in Hudson County. She said she saw her win as a victory for concerned residents focused on issues.

"I'm proud to be the first woman mayor of Hoboken," said Zimmer. "I didn't realize that I was the first for the entire county."

Zimmer noted that as acting mayor, she'd already restored the City Council's power to appoint the zoning board, "removing the potential for the kind of corruption that may have occurred this summer."

'A Different Place'

Hoboken's politics have been controlled for decades by a tightly organized Democratic political machine that grew out of the city's history as the port for New Jersey's once-thriving heavy industry, Reed said. In the past two decades, an influx of young office workers from across the Hudson River in Manhattan has reshaped Hoboken, filling new apartment towers that face the river and the older townhouses and tenements that line the city's back streets.

"Hoboken has become a different place, but until recently the mayor was closely connected with the organization that made Hoboken work, for decades," said Reed.

Zimmer was a public relations executive and worked to restrict development and develop parks in Hoboken before she was elected to the City Council.

Not Much Leeway

Zimmer will have little leeway to balance the needs of the newcomers, who would like to restrict development, and long-time residents and the less wealthy, who want to see Hoboken continue to grow, said Maurice Fitzgibbons, a former chairman of Hoboken's Democratic Party.

"She needs a good administration to back her up," Fitzgibbons said in a telephone interview. More than 7,000 people didn't vote for Zimmer, he noted. "My advice to her would be to unify the city."

Zimmer says her priority is to keep the city growing.

"We've got to make sure we are well-positioned as a city where it's a great place for high-tech companies and new businesses," she said. "We could be a model green city, and that will attract companies to come to our town and expand the arts as we do new development. That's part of the reason people come to Hoboken."

In 2005, former Hoboken Mayor [Anthony J. Russo](#) was sentenced to 30 months in federal prison and fined \$30,000 for taking bribes from an accountant and a towing contractor to help them get city contracts. He was also ordered to pay the city \$317,000 in restitution.

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