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Richard
Johnson

With Paula Froelich
and Chris Willson

CITY Council candidate **Vincent Gentile** has come out against a proposed gay rights bill — and now a group of drag queens is threatening to campaign “for” him on the streets of Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights and Fort Hamilton.

Cross-dressing performer **Frankie Cock-tail** (pictured) says that Gentile, who’s running for election in Brooklyn, has spent plenty of leisure time in the West Village at Lips, the transvestite entertainment palace on Bank Street.

“He’s been here. We call him our Miss Ethel Merman,” Cocktail tells **PAGE SIX’S Ian Spiegelman**.

Many arrow-straight men enjoy being entertained by female impersonators, but Gentile has earned himself a special place in the square-shouldered diva’s heart.

“We love his big lips, big hips and many kisses,” says Cocktail, who performs as **Dolly Parton**.

Though Gentile, a former state senator, opposes a law that would require any company doing business with the city to provide health insurance for their employees’ same-sex domestic partners, Cocktail and her gender-bending pals want to get the vote out for their favorite pol.

“We ladies are thinking of standing in front of the polls on Election Day asking the women of Bay Ridge to stand with us in solidarity by voting for our for-



paigned manager, lawyer **Tom Shanahan**, who says, “I can tell you that we’ve had dinner there.”

mer senator. The council needs a good friend to the drag queens among its ranks.”

Gentile campaign rep **Bill Green** denies that the candidate has spent any time at Lips, declaring, “It’s absurd, ridiculous and untrue. Just look at the timing. It’s two weeks from election day — It’s Silly Season!”

But we had the story confirmed by none other than Gentile’s former campaign manager, lawyer **Tom Shanahan**, who says, “I can tell you that we’ve had dinner there.”

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■ CITY/ELECTIONS

Gay Flaps in Brooklyn Race

Final stretch of Bay Ridge Council race includes fireworks

BY PAUL SCHINDLER

A February 25 special election to fill a City Council vacancy in Brooklyn, which had already garnered wide interest among gay and lesbian rights advocates, took two gay-related twists as the race headed into the final stretch.

A Page 6 gossip item in the *New York Post* on February 14 reported that former State Senator Vincent Gentile, one of the candidates vying to fill the 43rd district Bay Ridge vacancy left by Martin Golden, who wrested Gentile's seat in the legislature away from him in November, has spent "plenty of time" at Lips, the West Village drag bar.

Gentile's lame-duck vote against the Sexual Orientation Non Discrimination Act (SONDA) in December, after repeated written promises of support made to Brooklyn's Lambda Independent Democrats and the Empire State Pride Agenda, has galvanized leading LGBT leaders, including those two groups, State Assemblymember Deborah Glick, and City Councilmembers Christine Quinn and Phillip Reed to jump

into the race in support of Democrat Joanne Seminara.

The *Post* item took particular glee in tweaking Gentile and noting so subtly suggesting that Gentile's fondness for Lips might not simply be a reflection of the mainstream vogue in recent years for all things drag.

"Many arrow-straight men

enjoy being entertained by female impersonators, but Gentile has earned himself a special place in the square-shouldered diva's heart," the *Post* wrote, before quoting Lips entertainer Frankie Cocktail as saying, "We love his big lips, big hips and many kisses."

The account went on to report that despite Gentile's opposition to Quinn's bill in the Council that would require contractors doing business with the city to provide gay and lesbian employees part-

ner benefits equal to those offered the spouses of married employees, Cocktail and other drag performers from the club plan to travel to Bay Ridge to campaign on the candidate's behalf.

The *Post* quoted Gentile spokesperson Bill Green as dismissing the story as "absurd, ridiculous, and untrue," but also

A Gentle spokesperson dismissed the story, but gay civil rights attorney Tom Shanahan confirmed its substance.

reported that gay civil rights attorney Thomas Shanahan, who headed up Gentile's first run for public office, confirmed that he had been to Lips with the former state senator.

The February 14 item was the second time that Page 6 had raised eyebrows in the political world concerning Gentile.

In December 19 item reported as though it were "blind," the newspaper asked, "Which closet-

former mayor has made at least one stump appearance for her in the weeks since the race began.

According to a written statement, the Log Cabin group worked for more than three weeks in the hopes of offering volunteer support, financial contributions, and an endorsement to O'Keefe.

"O'Keefe campaign manager Mike Allegretti, when reached on the phone by Log Cabin, stated that the campaign did not want the public endorsement of a gay group," according to the Log Cabin statement.

Contrasting O'Keefe's posture with that of Giuliani, Bloomberg, and Governor George Pataki, who have all welcomed gay endorsements, the Log Cabin termed the council candidate's attitude "reactionary" and "an insult to the voters in the district—gay and straight—who believe in the Republican ideals of individual liberty and equal rights."

Nearly one third of registered voters in the 43rd district are Republicans, a very high showing

for Mayor Mike Bloomberg and former Mayor Rudy Giuliani. O'Keefe served as a commissioner in the Giuliani administration and the

for the G. O. P. in New York City outside of Staten Island, and as the only Republican in a field that also includes three high profile Democrats. O'Keefe is given a good shot at victory on February 25.

Seminara, who has run twice before unsuccessfully for the 43rd Council seat, has attracted a broad array of progressive support, especially from groups angry over Gentile's betrayal on SONDA. Her other endorsements include the Stonewall Democrats, the Communications Workers of America, Local 1180, UNITE, Local 1199, the Transit Workers Union, Local 100, the Sierra Club, the Tenants Political Action Committee, and the Working Families Party.

Asked why the Working Families Party was supporting her, Dan Cantor replied, "What is Working Families Party all about? Freedom, equality, and solidarity, so this wasn't hard. We wanted to send an unequivocal message of support for gay rights And supporting Seminara was the best way to do that."

In past races, Seminara did not flinch in the face of attacks by her opponent, Golden, over her gay endorsements. "She doesn't share our values," a 1997 Golden flyer read.

In 2001, Seminara charged Golden was "one of the most homophobic, if not the most homophobic member of the City Council."

The polls in the 43rd district will be open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. on February 25. A special election in the 18th district in the South Bronx pits former State Senator Pedro Espada, Jr. against Kristen Padilla, a Rutgers Law School administrator.

Read about that race at <http://www.gaycitynews.com/gcn/207/gaypols.html>.