

NEWS

Rockland Legislator Frank Sparaco sentenced to jail

Akiko Matsuda amatsuda@lohud.com

Published 12:18 p.m. ET Apr. 23, 2015 | Updated 5:36 p.m. ET Apr. 23, 2015

NEW CITY – A judge chided Rockland County Legislator Frank Sparaco for how far his star had fallen as he sentenced Sparaco on Thursday to eight weekends in county jail on election-fraud charges.

Clarkstown Justice Howard Gerber on Thursday honored a plea deal that Sparaco entered Feb. 6 to misdemeanor charges of filing false nominating petitions.

Gerber sentenced him to serve county jail time over eight weekends starting at 6 p.m. Friday. Sparaco's jail time will be followed by three years on probation, during which he cannot be involved in any political activity other than registering in a party and voting.

Sparaco's sentencing was originally scheduled to take place last week, but was pushed back after Sparaco appeared before Gerber without having complied with the judge's order to resign from his county legislator's job. Gerber threatened to override the plea deal and give Sparaco the maximum sentence by law, one year in jail.

Instead, the judge granted Sparaco a second chance and told him to resign by Wednesday.

Sparaco followed the order this time.

Sparaco, 39, had quickly risen through the party ranks, starting with serving as president of the Rockland Young Republicans from 2001-2007. He was elected to the Rockland County Legislature to represent Clarkstown in 2007. A U.S. Navy veteran, Sparaco has been an outspoken advocate for gun rights.

The charges filed against Sparaco in November - originally felonies - alleged he filed nominating petitions with the Rockland Board of Elections that contained false statements and information regarding the addresses of the people he was designating for positions in the Clarkstown Republican Party.

Sparaco pleaded guilty to eight misdemeanor charges for filing election petitions that nominated Vincent Marzella, Seth Gross and his cousins — Michael Kuropatski and Keith Kuropatski — as candidates for Clarkstown Republican Committee positions, listing addresses that were not their real residences. He also pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor charges of furnishing false information by renting a room at his Valley Cottage home to the Kuropatski brothers to unlawfully register them to vote in Clarkstown.

After his arrest in November, Sparaco was fired from his \$103,600-per-year Clarkstown Highway Department job as confidential secretary to the highway superintendent.

At Thursday's sentencing, Gerber repeatedly told the controversial political figure to learn from this experience.

He called him a "rising star (who) has fallen very quickly, very far."

"I don't get any joy out of putting people in jail," the judge said. "Hopefully, when the door closes behind you each of those weekends, when you can't be with your family, ... perhaps you get the message."

After sentencing, Kevin Conway, Sparaco's attorney, said he was grateful that Gerber honored the plea deal.

"He's looking forward to moving forward with his life, for his family and his kids, and to begin being respected by the community," Conway said.

Rockland County Democratic Committee Chairwoman Kristen Zebrowski Stavisky said Thursday that committee members in Sparaco's district held a caucus and voted unanimously to recommend longtime Congers resident Richard Diaz be appointed to fill out Sparaco's term for the rest of 2015. The Democratic-majority county legislature is expected to vote on the appointment May 5.

Twitter: @LohudAkiko