

Could the real intention be to resurrect a merger?

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THERE could be more to the plot to overthrow the sitting Liberal members of Ryde Council, according to those with a penchant for conspiracy in government.

The conspiracy has as much to do with Gladys Berijikian's backflip on merging Ryde, Hunters Hill and Lane Cove councils as it has to controlling what goes on in our neighbourhoods.

This is their scenario.

The Ryde branch of the

Liberal Party is said to have been stacked by new members associated with the Left and Moderate factions. Under the party system the candidates are chosen more by the central party leadership than the membership, and in NSW that is dominated by members from the Left and Moderates.

They have the numbers, according to sources, to oust the sitting mayor Bill Pickering and deputy mayor Jane Stott and to force former mayor Roy Maggio to stand

as an independent.

The remaining sitting councillor Sarkis Yedelian then hopes to lead a team of new Left and Moderate candidates to win a majority on the new council.

If they achieve that majority, mark that down as Step One.

Now take a look at the Hunters Hill, where traditionally the councillors are all independents, not declaring any party affiliation on the ballot paper.

For this election, however,

the Liberal Party is planning to endorse candidates for the first time. The ticket will be led by Zac Mikes.

If he and his running mates in North and South wards were somehow to secure a majority on the council of six, with the mayor elected separately, mark that down as Step Two.

Six of the current Lane Cove councillors are Liberals and three are independents.

Even with the Labor Party endorsing Andrew Zbik in

West Ward and David Roenfeldt in Central Ward, it is unlikely that the Liberals will lose their majority.

It is also unlikely that the Left and Moderates will have worked any miracle to enforce its influence there.

So where's the conspiracy?

On Saturday, the Liberals will hold their pre-selection meetings and if all goes according to the Left and Moderate's plot, their candidates will head out on their mission to win the election.

If Step One and Step Two are achieved, cynics suggest that the Left and Moderates will then set about merging these councils, just at the Baird-Berijikian government wanted before the legal challenge from 12 councils, including Hunters Hill and Lane Cove, put a spanner in the works.

By changing the councillors, resistance subsides, and hey presto, the councils do what Liberal HQ says and a merger is on, after all.

Well, that's one theory.