

Editorial Opinion

Naples Daily News

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Midyear report

How community is faring on priorities

When 2016 began, the Naples Daily News outlined seven priorities it suggested the community and leadership should focus on to achieve progress. Halfway into the year, here's our view of how it's going:

Housing for all

Housing prices have risen by double digits while wages remain stagnant to modestly higher. Apartment complexes are 99 percent occupied. Rents are soaring. Deserving of kudos are United Way of Collier County, which focused attention on the issue; Habitat for Humanity, which perseveres in building dozens of homes; and Rural Neighborhoods, focused on Immokalee housing.

Collier commissioners get both kudos and kicks. They've followed a well-conceived staff proposal to assemble a diverse task force to create a long-term housing plan in 2017. On the down side, they missed an opportunity to use county land to create housing for front-line workers or seniors just outside Naples, broke a promise not to waive any prior affordable housing commitments in developments and too often talked about the issue parochially.

Economic diversification

The year began with little optimism for diversifying an economy that's relied on hospitality, construction, real estate and agriculture. Midyear, there's optimism. We've asked for years when all the conversation and investment in the county's economic development office would pay off. We may be getting the answer. Commissioners in the coming weeks are to consider sealing deals with \$1.7 million to create nearly 625 well-paying jobs in the county for two corporate headquarters, one of which would be 560 jobs. Arthrex is the corporate rock of Collier County. We could use a few more rocks.

Kudos to commissioners for embarking on sports tourism through hosting a national pickleball tournament and a study of a possible indoor-outdoor athletic complex.

The nonvoter

This election year is too important for voters to stay away in the primary, as they did in August 2014 when an embarrassing 21 percent of registered voters cast ballots in Collier. Only 23 percent in Lee voted. We're encouraged that voters are engaged this time and there will be a concerted push to get people to turn out for the Aug. 30 primary. We're sensing people understand the potential for a change in direction by a new majority on the Collier County Commission. We see registered voters grasping that school district control is at stake in Collier, where either of two vacant seats could tip the control on a deeply divided 3-2 board. In Lee, there is potential for significant change with 17 candidates seeking four seats on what becomes a seven-member County Commission.

Education accountability

The state has work to do in reducing testing and addressing accountability issues with the new Florida Standards Assessment test and school grading. The election will influence local accountability. We're confident Collier schools are in excellent hands with Superintendent Kamela Patton and Lee with Superintendent Greg Adkins.

Northern Estates

Northern Golden Gate Estates is a 50,000-acre mostly residential area laid out decades ago with little forethought to public services. It needs attention. County leaders so far this year have reacted well to address intersection, bridge, park and other needs, including a moratorium on charter school siting.

Long-term planning

Collier government planners are making progress on much-needed updates that eventually will include future plans for the Estates, Golden Gate, Immokalee and lands outside Immokalee. A habitat conservation plan by developers is in a yearslong process but brought needed attention to prospects of future growth.

Emergency response

Consolidation of fire-rescue agencies that voters called for in 2010 is a complex, long-term process. We're seeing minor progress so far this year, but at least it's moving forward carefully — small steps are better than a wrong step.



LETTERS

Walter Tharr, *Naples*

Chance encounter?

Hours before the latest Benghazi report was made public, "old friends" Bill Clinton and Loretta Lynch chanced to meet in aircraft parked on a tarmac in Arizona.

They may have exchanged pleasantries, according to Attorney General Lynch's comments to the media, but the timing and the celebrity (read: notoriety) of the two individuals provided pressure by wonks and workers to scratch their collective heads in disbelief.

Given the widely reported facts: Clinton appointed Lynch as federal prosecutor during his administration. President Barack Obama appointed Lynch as attorney general during his administration. Clinton is spokesman for his wife's presidential campaign.

The blatant impropriety of two players in a contentious struggle for the right to represent the Democratic Party is utter political naiveté in the main and pernicious in particular. Some pundits are already calling the former president's private rendezvous with Lynch a pragmatic reminder that her activity — down to Election Day — regarding any negative directive toward the Democratic candidate will be scrutinized by the "powers that count." On the other side of the aisle, Republican forces are demanding Lynch resign or recuse herself from any future confrontation.

The Democratic National Committee and Bill Clinton have not been available for comment, as of this date, but their disavowal of this chance encounter will be forthcoming.

"Glad we had this chance to chat, Loretta; see ya in Philly!"

Anton Selkowitz, *Naples*

Guns

The massacre in Orlando is, sadly, only too familiar. Our governor spoke out about the need for swift punishment, at the same time lawmakers are trying to push an open carry law through the Legislature.

The president will speak and deplore the carnage; the clergy will try to comfort those who were affected personally, although we are all affected when something like this happens, and we are all to blame for our complacency in the face of out of control gun violence.

It is a fact, verified twice by Politico, that more Americans have died from gun violence since 1968 than were killed in all the wars we have fought, including the Civil War. The majority of people, including gun owners, favor background checks before being allowed to purchase guns, and yet Congress repeatedly refuses to even consider such a law.

Why? Because the National Rifle Association terrifies them, and threatens to run a campaign against them if they support such a law. This is exactly what is wrong with the country. The powerful buy elections

Letters policy

Letters can be 275 words or less. Letters may be edited for clarity or taste, to eliminate personal attacks and to prevent libel. Letters may be edited for accuracy, rejected or returned to the writer to resubmit a new letter. The source of a statistic must be attributed within the letter. No poetry, letter-writing campaigns or airing of a personal grievance against a business. Submissions cannot be handwritten. Due to volume, publication presently is limited to one per person within a month. City of residence and a contact phone number are required.

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by buying the politicians, and the people's wishes don't really matter.

Sen. Bernie Sanders is the only candidate who was telling the truth. When will we wake up and vote for politicians who have our interests at heart, not those of the rich and big business, and the NRA?

Carol Hughes, *Naples*

Federal followers

Christian conservatives, don't be deceived by the left and Collier County School Board candidates' Stephanie Lucarelli and Erick Carter's campaigns.

They support the liberal agenda: "dumbed down" Common Core and revisionist history, stripping 99.96 percent of students' privacy rights in favor of the other 0.04 percent, and encouraging federal extortion tactics that subjugate local governing bodies.

Like current board members Kathleen Curatolo, Julie Sprague and Roy Terry, they will ignore pornographic materials in media centers and falsified textbooks to indoctrinate the next generation with their socialist agenda. Wake up — we must fight this battle for the children's sake!

The transgender bathroom issue has nothing to do with marginalizing the rights of those 0.04 percent who are truly gender confused. Collier schools already have successfully accommodated their privacy needs; a policy that satisfies the President Barack Obama "edict." Yes, local boards are intelligent enough to obey all federal laws without marginalizing 99.96 percent. The true issue is protecting the 99.96 percent from sexual predators.

Common sense says this is an easy opportunity to "switch genders" and prey on others, the consequence of this "open door" policy, as witnessed by Target's policy.

Lucarelli and Carter are willing to allow the feds to extort decision-making from local authorities. They use fear and deception — "Junior ROTC, Head Start, ELL, free lunches, ESE, tech and staff programs will

be cut" and "taxes will go up" — while promoting the federal agenda. If seceding from federal tyranny is inevitable, board candidates Louise Penta and Lee Dixon won't cut children's programs or raise taxes.

In a \$1 billion budget, \$4.7 million of programs can be reallocated. Vote Penta and Dixon to protect the rights and safety of all children, secure local authority and ensure all our community's children receive a factual stellar education for their welfare and success.

Christine Sullivan, *Naples*

Important governance

The Collier County School Board election on Aug. 30 is critical. I'm supporting Stephanie Lucarelli and Erick Carter because, frankly, their opponents scare me.

Lucarelli and Carter are public school parents like me who understand the School Board shouldn't be a political battlefield. All of their children go to public school here (unlike their opponents), so they have a vested interest. They think it's madness to reject \$58 million of federal funding as a political protest, a plan proposed by their opponents. That money was paid by Collier taxpayers and is used for vital programs. Their opponents have said that they'd replace the funding by "finding wasteful spending" (as if \$58 million can be dug out of the district's couch cushions) or possibly raising taxes.

Lucarelli and Carter have good judgment and character.

Louise Penta keeps promising that, if elected, she'll "overturn Common Core." However, School Board members don't have that power. That's a state-level decision. Either Penta knows she's overpromising or she's out of touch. Which is worse?

Lee Dixon called a woman he disagreed with the "C" word on Twitter. His supporters say that's no big deal, but ask your mother, wife or daughter. They'll shudder. It's a vile, vicious word meant to demean, degrade, and diminish women. The idea that the worst kind of bully could gain power to make decisions about our daughters' education is inconceivable. I cannot believe that there are still people writing letters praising him. The funniest thing (you have to laugh) is that Dixon and his supporters are calling for ridding school materials of "pornography."

Vote for Stephanie Lucarelli and Erick Carter for positive, sound governance.

Carolyn Mijokovic, *Estero*

Perfectly capable

In response to Burke Cueny's letter, in which he stated, "The nation's media, overall, is determined to disgrace and make a fool of (Donald) Trump."

No, sir. He is doing an exceptional job of that all by himself. November can't get here soon enough.