

Meeting Called to Order By Mark Frandsen, President at 6:00 pm.

Invocation By: Mary Jepson

Pledge of Allegiance Led By: Norm Jepson

Dignitaries, Officials and Candidates were introduced. Guests were welcomed.

All in attendance were required to sign in. Members in good standing received name tags and lanyards. No audio or video recording is permitted at this meeting.

Mark began the meeting with the following:

- Alice Rothbauer co-chair of the REC noted that the July 18th Traditional Pie Rally was cancelled. It has been replaced by a "Get Out The Vote Day". Volunteers needed. Meet near the Osprey Walmart (a mid-county location) to canvass and phone voters. 8:30am to 11:00 am. Details to follow.
 - The South County REC Campaign office is now open. Located at 5920 Pan American Blvd in North Port. Open Monday through Friday from 10am to 4pm. Volunteers needed. Provide voter's info, maintain candidate materials, and other light duties as assigned. See Mark for details. Days are split between West Villages on Monday and Wednesday, North Port Club on Tuesdays and Thursdays and South County Club on Fridays. But you are welcome any day.
 - Mr. John Coughlin, President of the West Villages Club spoke briefly to apologize for mis-statements made by one of his members on social media. We need to work together to elect our candidates. The West Villages Club will host a Meet the Candidates event on June 29 at the Hotel Venezia beginning at 5:30pm. All are welcome.
 - Mr. Brad Baker was introduced. He is the incumbent candidate for the Hospital Board District 1. A Venice resident. Supports the building of the North Port Hospital. SMH has a 2.5 Billion budget. He has extensive work experience in Republican administrations.
 - Sydney Gruters was introduced. She is the Candidate for the newly created US House District 16. She has worked 20 years in government. She has experience serving the needs of constituents in her roles with Congressmen Steube and Buchanan. She also worked with Alice Rothbauer to reform New College at the request of Governor DeSantis and is endorsed by President Trump.
 - July 25th will be our annual Club Candidate Picnic. Held at the Scout House of Dallas White Park in North Port. Starts at 11am. \$10 per Adult. Tickets can be purchased at the website or at the door. Kids are free. Club Provides burgers, dogs, buns and beverages. Please bring a dish to pass. Call Karen Arlington or Mark to advise what you will bring.
 - In addition to our event, there will be 2 other North Port Commission Candidate Forums. On July 23rd at the VFW on Trott Circle at 6pm the Concerned Citizens led by Debbie McDowell will host. In this case, candidates will be provided questions 3 weeks in advance so they can prepare. On July 16th also at the same VFW and 6pm, the North Port Chamber of Commerce will host a Forum.
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Mark then introduced Mr. Jack Brill of the Sarasota County REC to moderate the debate. First off, Jack stated that there was a complaint raised about the REC endorsement of school board candidates.

Mr. Brill noted that the RPOF reviewed the procedures used and verified that the endorsement complied with all rules. This explanation was Emailed to all REC members as well.

All 4 candidates for the North Port Commissioner Seats were invited to this evening's Candidate Forum. However, Mr. Oleg Lisitsyn, Candidate (District 5) and Mrs. Ludmila Dunchyk, Candidate (District 4) declined to attend and speak to their North Port constituents, because they were attending another event in Manatee County.

Mr. Brill began the Forum using the 4 questions prepared by the North Port Republican Club. Mr. Phil Stokes the incumbent for District 5 and Elaine Allen Emrich, a candidate for District 4 were present. The candidates were not allowed to see the questions prior to the Forum. This began with each candidate offering a short opening statement.

The first question addressed how will the City of North Port cope with changes in the property tax system if the ballot initiative prevails? Elaine noted that it will be an uphill battle. The city will lose about \$8 million the first year (10% of the budget) and \$15 Million the second year. Phil stated that the City will have losses. Maybe it is time for government to re-imagine itself. Emphasis on what is needed and reduction of elective services. The private sector may provide outsourcing for government re-alignment and the City will adapt.

The second question centered on the topics of infrastructure, growth and jobs/employment. Phil answered first this time. He states that growth is inevitable because this is the most affordable area. But we must have smart, managed growth. Currently, 90% of revenue comes from residents. That must be re-balanced to include other sources. Infrastructure is an ongoing concern. We have aging bridges and water structures. The City has mapped out all the needed projects. Since borrowing has been denied by the voters, savings and other revenue sources will be needed to complete this. Elaine believes that we need to build trust with the residents. Educate them about what is happening in North Port. Growth should pay for itself. There are many solutions for environmental concerns. Toledo Blade expansion will be a source of Higher paying jobs for residents. This will also help diversify the tax base.

The topic of the 3rd question was the top 2 concerns for the city according to each candidate. Elaine spoke first. Keep North Port affordable. She has constituents that are living pay check to paycheck and some that cannot make it on a paycheck or their benefits. Non-profits should help with service gaps. Phil concurs on affordability. Government may have to re-invent itself. Provide essential services and only high value elective services. Time will work this all out. Infrastructure is another of his concerns. New funding sources must be found.

The final question sought the candidates' opinions on the Winchester annexation and the ongoing West Villages attempts at de-annexation. Phil spoke first. The de-annexation case MAY move to the state supreme court. A very small number of cases are accepted by the court. It is unclear if they will even hear the case. West Villages remaining in North Port is a win-win for all. The Winchester annexation will add 6000 new homes that will help share the costs of the West Villages District. The developer fronts all the infrastructure. There will be 50% open space which is a high amount. We need to educate everyone about this positive development. Elaine noted that as a reporter in the 1990s she evaluated all the development plans of West Villages and they have fulfilled nearly every plan except there is not a large

Shopping mall featuring stores like a Macy's. It turned out very well. North Port welcomed the development while the county rejected it. It was been a plus for legacy North Port.

The Forum was concluded and appreciated by the full house crowd in attendance.

Finally, Mark announced that Mr. Jay Collins our Lieutenant Governor and Candidate for Governor will be at the North Port Chamber of Commerce Tomorrow June 23, starting at 3 pm. All are welcome.

The meeting ended about 7:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marian L. Patricoski, Secretary