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Jeff Bell quits sheriff's race

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Jeff Bell quits sheriff's race

by **News Flash**

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Posted: **01/31/08 20:23:26**

Jeff Bell quits sheriff's race

Herald Tribune wrote:

One of the leading candidates for sheriff unexpectedly and without explanation quit the race.

In a short e-mail to supporters, Capt. Jeff Bell, a deputy with the Sheriff's Office, said he was leaving the race for "personal reasons."

Bell, a Republican, did not return phone calls seeking further comment.

Bell was fast becoming a favorite in the contest, having sewn up endorsements and campaign donations from some of the biggest names in local politics. Former Manatee County Sheriff Charlie Wells, District Attorney Earl Moreland and State Sen. Mike Bennett all had backed Bell. In fact, Bennett made his endorsement on Wednesday.

Bell, 46, raised almost \$50,000 for the campaign.

He's the third candidate to file for the office, then withdraw. Longboat Police Chief Al Hogle and former Sheriff's Deputy John Herlihy also have dropped out.

The news was a shock to Sarasota County's chief deputy Larry Dunklee, one of the three remaining candidates running for sheriff. Still, Dunklee said it doesn't change his view of the race. He said he likes his chances with or without Bell in the race.

Dunklee and former Sheriff's Deputy David Gustafson are the only two Republicans running to replace Sheriff Bill Balkwill, a Republican. Democrat Curt Lavarello, Executive Director of Sarasota's Coalition on Substance Abuse, has also filed.

Balkwill announced last year that he would not seek a third four-year term in office.

Source

by **idiots**

Posted: **01/31/08 21:16:06**

Dang!!! You know for a FACT that someone had DIRT on Jeff Bell -- and that's why he just HAD to withdraw!!! Can you imagine if he had gone forward and then the intel was "leaked"??? He

02/02/08

Bell drops out of sheriff race

Three candidates remain in campaign

Capt. Jeff Bell of the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office announced Thursday he is withdrawing from the sheriff's race.

Bell could not be reached for comment, but issued a statement saying it was for "personal reasons."

In the statement, Bell wrote he wanted to "thank all of his supporters, volunteers, and all of the wonderful people he has met during the campaign."

He also wished Sarasota County residents well and assures them the office of sheriff is "a strong one" and residents are of the "highest priority."

Bell, a Republican, first announced his candidacy for the sheriff's job in October. He is a 25-year veteran with the SCSO, and recently has served as head of the South County Drug Task Force. The task force has been responsible for busting several grow houses in the North Port area.

Bell, 46, reported raising \$49,325 for his campaign through Dec. 31, 2007. Most of Bell's registered contributors were from Sarasota. He also listed campaign contributors from other states such as Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Illinois. None were from North Port or Englewood.

Bell's Web site was functioning Friday morning but was inaccessible by mid-afternoon.

Before announcing his withdrawal, Bell received endorsements from State Attorney Earl Moreland, Public Defender Elliot Metcalfe, Sarasota County Commissioner Joe Barbetta, Col. Dan Kennedy of the Sarasota Military Academy and retired Maj. Kevin Gooding of the SCSO.

David Gustafson, formerly with the SCSO and also a candidate for sheriff this year, said, "I hope all is well with him." Gustafson said some of Bell's supporters with whom he spoke were "shocked" to learn of his withdrawal.

Bell joined John Herlihy and Albert F. Hogle, both Republicans, who also withdrew their candidacies for sheriff earlier.

Three candidates remain in the race, including Gustafson and Larry Dunklee, both Republicans, and Curtis Lavarello, the lone Democrat.

Staff Report

Thursday, Feb. 7, 2008 at 5:39 p.m.

More on Jeff Bell dropping out

I'm still playing catch up after taking the last four days off to recover from the presidential primary election.

One of the issues I'm trying to follow up on is Jeff Bell, the now former Republican candidate for Sarasota sheriff who abruptly abandoned the race late last week with little explanation.

On Tuesday, he officially submitted the papers to pull out of the race and sent a statement to the media.

"Withdrawing from this race has been one of the most difficult decisions I have ever made" stated Bell. "However, after great discussion with family and close friends, I have chosen to withdraw based upon the many demands a continued campaign into the fall present to myself and my family at this time."

Also, I got a hold of a copy of an email Bell's now former campaign spokesman, John Dowd, sent out to supporters and contributors over the weekend.

"As to the reasons for Jeff's decision to withdraw I can tell you only what I know. I nor any of his "inner circle" were consulted regarding his decision. It was Jeff's and Jeff's alone. "Personal reasons" are just that personal and until Jeff explains the specifics to us we will have to accept that. As of yesterday he is on leave from the Sheriff's office for an undetermined time. I have been asked by numerous people "What happened?" My answer is the same "I'm not quite sure" and I'm not."

The Republican race for sheriff is now down to two men: Larry Dunklee and David Gustafson.

On the Democratic side, Curt Lavarello is the lone candidate.