

Editorial: The right choice in Arlington County Board primary

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What Arlington residents need in their next County Board member is someone with a sophisticated grasp of the issues coupled with a sh*tkicker personality who understands he or she isn't there to win a popularity contest but to represent the public, often against an entrenched power structure.

(Those with long memories might agree that this description, to a degree, fits the persona of longtime board member Chris Zimmerman, at least in his early years in office. But that's a rabbit hole to go down another time.)

Of the five candidates seeking the Democratic nomination for the County Board seat being vacated after 12 years by Libby Garvey, two seem to approach that ideal. Among those who do not quite measure up, in our estimation:

- James DeVita seems a fine guy, but the fact he's seeking a County Board post just a year after emerging to run a somewhat quixotic state Senate campaign leaves one to wonder if he's been bitten by the run-for-office bug and will hop on whatever train is leaving the station any given year.
- While last year we endorsed J.D. Spain Sr. in the Democratic primary, he finished fourth out of six (so much for the value of our editorial support). That result suggests that despite extensive community involvement, voters apparently weren't enamored either of Spain himself, of his positions, or a combination of the two. Will 2024 be any different?
- Tenley Peterson certainly has the "sophisticated grasp of the issues" part down pat, but she's one of the county's modern-day "in-crowd" – or is quickly being co-opted into it out of mutual necessity – and we fear might not serve as the (to borrow a trendy phrase) change agent that the current County Board needs in its midst.

That leaves us with **Natalie Roy** (whom we also endorsed in the six-way 2023 Democratic primary; she finished just out of the running in third) and **Julie Farnam**.

We do not align 100% with either on the issues. Heck, we may not align with them 50% of the time. But they bring a deep understanding of matters that need immediate attention and triage, particularly the impact of willy-nilly urbanization that seems to be a fetish of the current County Board.

And they are cognizant of the kabuki-theater world of Arlington governance, where a placid surface often masks furious infighting below the waterline, out of public view.

And like Zimmerman, Roy and Farnam seem to have, in their public personas as least, a thick-skinned imperviousness to the slings and arrows that have come their way.

Given the ranked-choice format of the June 18 primary, voters can (but are not obligated to) mark up to three candidates in order of preference. We'd suggest Roy as #1 and Farnam as #2. Use the #3 vote as you see fit, or leave it blank.

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