

GUARDIAN

August 2016

Volume 22, Number 2

Primary Election Day is Tuesday, August 30 – see inside for candidate Q&A

HRCNCF Queries Candidates for Alachua County Commission, School Board & Sheriff Races

The Human Rights Council of North Central Florida (HRCNCF) received written responses to its candidate questionnaires from all Alachua County Commission, School Board and Sheriff candidates appearing on the August 30 primary election ballot.

Although both County Commission and School Board candidates run from districts, these candidates are elected county-wide. In the case of the two Democratic primary county commission races, only registered Democrats may cast ballots; the winner of each race will face off against an opponent on the November 8 general election ballot.

Likewise, only registered Democratic voters will choose between the two Democratic Sheriff candidates, incumbent Sheriff Sadie Darnell and Zac Zedalis; the winner of that contest will go on to face Republican Jack Jacobs on the November 8 general election ballot.

Primary Election Day is Tuesday, August 30, with early voting running daily from Friday, August 19 to Saturday, August 27 at three voting sites: the downtown elections office at 515 N. Main St., and at the Millhopper and Tower Road libraries.

Responses from candidates to the HRCNCF questionnaire are provided below.

In the County Commission District 1 Democratic primary race, incumbent county commissioner Mike Byerly is running against Kevin Thorpe, who ran unsuccessfully against Ken Cornell two years ago for county commission.

“As chair of the County Commission in 2013, Byerly provided the much-needed leadership to help pass the human rights ordinance which added sexual orientation and gender identity to the county's nondiscrimination code,” said HRCNCF President Bob Karp. The ordinance passed on a 4-0 vote with Commissioners Mike Byerly, Robert Hutchinson, Lee Pinkoson and Chuck Chestnut voting in support.

Karp noted that the passage of the ordinance was especially gratifying, since Alachua County had been

Three ways to vote:

Vote by Mail: Contact the Supervisor of Elections at 352-374-5252 or at www.VoteAlachua.com to have a ballot mailed to you.

Vote Early: Early voting runs daily from Friday, August 19, to Saturday, August 27, at the Supervisor of Elections Office, 515 N. Main St., and at the Millhopper and Tower Road public libraries.

Vote on Election Day: Vote in your own polling precinct from 7 AM to 7 PM on Tuesday, August 30.

without LGBT antidiscrimination protections since its original ordinance was repealed by county voters in 1994.

While Kevin Thorpe provided good responses to the HRCNCF questionnaire, he took a strikingly different stance on LGBT issues in a video where as church pastor he denounced same-sex marriage. “Pastor Thorpe has spoken to us about his statements on the video,” said HRCNCF Board member Linda Bassham, adding “he has not regretted having made them, except to say they have been taken out of context in some way.”

In the County Commission District 3 Democratic primary race, county commissioner Robert Hutchinson faces off against Larry McDaniel. Hutchinson has been a long-time consistent supporter of LGBT rights and actively supported and voted for passage of the 2013 human rights ordinance.

“Not only has Hutchinson been a reliable voice for human rights on the commission, he has demonstrated

unique talents in finding creative and workable solutions to seemingly intractable problems facing the community,” said Karp.

There are no other party primaries on the August 30 ballot. The winner of the District 1 and 3 Democratic primary races will face write-in candidates on the Nov. 8 general election ballot. District 5 Commissioner Chuck Chestnut faced no Democratic opposition, so on the November ballot he will face openly-transgender write-in candidate Chloe Goldbach. There are no Republican candidates running for County Commission.

Alachua County School Board member Eileen Roy faces challenger Juliun Kinsey in the only contested School Board race. (Current School Board member Leanetta McNealy was re-elected without opposition.)

“Eileen Roy has been a consistent and dependable voice for equality on behalf of all students, including

LGBT and questioning students,” said Bassham, who noted that Juliun Kinsey did provide good responses to the HRCNCF questionnaire.

School Board races are nonpartisan, so all Alachua County registered voters may vote in the School Board District 2 race in the August 30 election.

In the Alachua County Sheriff Democratic primary race, Karp noted that both incumbent Sheriff Sadie Darnell and Zac Zedalis provided good responses to the HRCNCF questionnaire.

In addition to voting early from August 19-27, voters may request a vote-by-mail ballot by calling the Alachua County Supervisor of Elections Office at 352-374-5252 or ordering one on-line at www.votealachua.com. On Election Day, August 30, voters must go to their own precinct polling locations to cast a ballot.

HRCNCF 2016 Alachua County Commission, School Board & Sheriff Questionnaire Responses from Aug. 30 Primary Election Candidates

Responses to 2016 Alachua County Commission Candidate Questionnaire

- 1. The Board of County Commissioners has amended the Alachua County Code of Ordinances to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations. Do you support this action and why?**

County Commission District 1:

MIKE BYERLY (DEM): I supported the amendment, and voted for it. Sexual orientation and gender identity should not be factors in how an individual is considered by employers, landlords, or those who provide public accommodations.

KEVIN THORPE (DEM): Yes.

County Commission District 3:

ROBERT HUTCHINSON (DEM): Yes, I strongly supported this as an essential extension of civil rights protections. It is good for people, and it is good for our business climate that we be known as an open and inclusive community. I was also proud to accept the Equality Florida award on behalf of the County Commission for our support of LQBT rights.

LARRY McDANIEL (DEM): Yes, I support this action. Each and every individual has the right according to law to not be discriminated against in any manner. I was on the coordinating committee that developed the plan to have EO Officer in the City of Gainesville be a direct report to the City Commission. The group’s goal was to allow for the position to have more autonomy in resolving issues in this area.

- 2. Do you support the U.S. Supreme Court's 2015 decision which proclaimed a constitutional right to marriage equality for same-sex couples? Do you believe that same-sex marriages are of equal worth to society as opposite-sex marriages? Why or why not?**

County Commission District 1:

MIKE BYERLY (DEM): Yes, and Yes. The love of one human being for another, and commitment to another, has the same moral/ethical value, regardless of sexual orientation, and our laws should reflect that equality.

KEVIN THORPE (DEM): Yes.

County Commission District 3:

ROBERT HUTCHINSON (DEM): Yes, I support the rights of same-sex couples to marry as a matter of equity under the law, as an essential freedom and right-to-privacy regarding personal matters, and as avoiding the infringement of religious doctrine on civil society. I have participated in many civil unions and same-sex marriages and hosted a few at Prairie Creek Lodge. My wife and I have rented our property to gay tenants.

LARRY McDANIEL (DEM): I believe that all citizens of our community are of equal worth to society no matter what their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity.

- 3. Do you advocate diversity training for county employees to include lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues?**

County Commission District 1:

MIKE BYERLY (DEM): Yes.

KEVIN THORPE (DEM): Yes.

County Commission District 3:

ROBERT HUTCHINSON (DEM): Yes, especially if the training includes opportunities for people to freely express their concerns, ask difficult questions, and come away with a greater understanding of the needs of others.

LARRY McDANIEL (DEM): I believe that when any municipality invests in diversity management the more it will benefit its diverse workforce.

4. **Should annual proclamations in recognition of Alachua County Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Days come to a vote before the Board of County Commissioners, would you vote to support or oppose such proclamations?**

County Commission District 1:

MIKE BYERLY (DEM): Yes. I will vote to support.

KEVIN THORPE (DEM): Support.

County Commission District 3:

ROBERT HUTCHINSON (DEM): Yes, I have supported such proclamations in the past and will continue to do so. Additionally, I was supportive of the Pride Festival when it needed to use County grounds (during the renovation of Bo Diddley Plaza).

LARRY McDANIEL (DEM): I would review the request as I would any other that would come before the Commission for action. My vote would be based on the information provided and would benefit the County as whole.

**Responses to
2016 School Board of Alachua County
Candidate Questionnaire**

1. **The School Board of Alachua County's Student Code of Conduct specifically bars discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Would you support and vote for a similar antidiscrimination policy that would prohibit such discrimination against teachers, administrators and other School Board employees?**

JULIUN KINSEY: Absolutely, I will vote to prohibit discrimination of any kind based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

EILEEN ROY: Yes. We already have antidiscrimination policies in place to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity (including transgender status), which are "protected classes". Policy # 3122. Non-Discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity, and Policy #3362. Anti-Harassment.

2. **National studies have shown that harassment and violence toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) youth, and those who are perceived as gay, in public schools leads to**

higher dropout rates and up to three times the rate of suicide among LGBT teens compared to their straight peers. Would you vote to support implementing an anti-bullying policy that specifically protects LGBT as well as other vulnerable students?

JULIUN KINSEY: Yes, I will vote to support an anti-bullying policy that specifically protects LGBT as well as other vulnerable students.

EILEEN ROY: Yes. Again, we already have policies in place to protect students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, which are protected classes. Policy #5517. Anti-Harassment and Bullying, and Policy #2260. Non-Discrimination and Access to Equal Education Opportunity.

3. **Please provide an example of one proactive measure that the School Board could take to provide a safer, friendlier learning environment for LGBT students.**

JULIUN KINSEY: I will ensure that Alachua County aligns classroom instruction with shared values and respect for differences.

EILEEN ROY: The School Board could designate one counselor at each middle and high school who has additional training in LGBT issues. This person could be identified with rainbow stickers or a rainbow sign on his/her door, and would be the go-to person for any LGBT student in distress.

4. **Do you support the formation of student clubs known as "Gay-Straight Alliances" which provide an opportunity for gay and nongay students to meet together on school property as do other extracurricular clubs?**

JULIUN KINSEY: I support the formation of Gay-Straight Alliances and all student organizations that promote inclusion and reflect the diversity of our community.

EILEEN ROY: Yes. We already have them.

5. **Recently, the Marion County School Board voted to require transgender students to use bathroom facilities that correspond with the gender listed on their birth certificates, as opposed to using the bathroom corresponding to their gender identity. Should this issue come before the Alachua County School Board, would you support providing gender-neutral bathroom facilities to accommodate transgender students? Do you believe transgender or gender nonconforming students should be able to use the bathroom facilities that correspond with their gender identity?**

JULIUN KINSEY: I support providing gender-neutral bathroom facilities to accommodate transgender students. I believe transgender and gender nonconforming students should be able to use the bathroom that corresponds with their gender identity.

EILEEN ROY: Yes. I was appalled at the actions of the Marion County School Board. Gender neutral bathrooms are not the answer, though that is what is proposed by many. Much preferable is to allow students to use the bathroom facilities that correspond to their gender identity.

Responses to 2016 Alachua County Sheriff Candidate Questionnaire

1. The Alachua County Sheriff's Office's anti-discrimination policy includes protections for employees against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Do you support this policy? Why or why not?

SADIE DARNELL (DEM): Yes, I have ensured our policies and procedures reflect my personal and professional stance in this regard. One of my first actions as Alachua County Sheriff was to amend the "leave policy" to add "Domestic Partner" to the definition of "immediate family member". This was done in 2007 in advance of any State or Federal action.

ZAC ZEDALIS (DEM): I absolutely support the policy and I will always look for ways to improve not just the policy but the culture of the sheriff's office. We all know you can write a policy but unless you drive that belief of equality that policy are just feel good words.

2. Do you believe the Alachua County Sheriff's Office staff --including jail employees, emergency call center employees and deputies --are sensitive enough to the needs of the public who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT)? Ifnot, what would you do as Sheriff to improve the sensitivity of staff to LGBT issues?

SADIE DARNELL (DEM): Due to personnel turnover and because protection from discrimination is such an important and basic human right, I am sure there is an on-going need for improvement to ensure sensitively and awareness. So no, I am not satisfied that we are "sensitive enough"; this continues to be a dynamic process.

ZAC ZEDALIS (DEM): Well, I would have to ask the people in our community that have had exposure to those areas of our organization and that are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, if they feel as if we are sensitive enough. I believe we can always improve and we should strive to do that every day.

3. As part of the hiring process, does the Alachua County Sheriff's Office proactively seek to recruit LGBT deputies and other staff as part of achieving a more diverse workplace? If not, should the Sheriff's Office do so?

SADIE DARNELL (DEM): Yes. Our workplace and recruitment efforts are welcoming and foster an inclusive and supportive environment. Our best recruiters are often our current and retired employees.

ZAC ZEDALIS (DEM): We currently do not recruit at all; when I say that we do not seek out people who truly want to have a career in serving and protecting. ACSO currently has such a high turnover rate (67%) due to morale, they just fill in with warm bodies. I believe in recruiting diversity on all levels but we should be looking for people with good character first. Our community is made up of so many different people, that is why it is such a great place to live.

4. Do you think the Alachua County Sheriff's Office provides the same amount of response and follow-up to alleged hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity as to other categories? To alleged domestic abuse cases in same-sex households? Ifnot, how would you as Sheriff improve this response?

SADIE DARNELL (DEM): Yes, I believe our response is professional and proper. Gainesville/Alachua County is a diverse community which makes those of us in public safety, likely, more progressive and enlightened than in some other communities. We adhere to Florida Statute 877.19 regarding the reporting of incidents of hate crimes.

ZAC ZEDALIS (DEM): Being employed at ACSO since 2005, I have never witnessed any employee not follow through with their responsibilities based upon who the victim was. That is the greatest part of our job as law enforcement professionals; we DO NOT have the luxury of judgment. It does not matter what color, religion, sexual preference you are, if you call 911 we are coming to serve you. That is the culture that has to be pushed by our organization. All the positive culture has to be pushed by the sheriff.

**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
OF NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA, INC.**

PO BOX 12912 GAINESVILLE, FL 32604
TEL: 352-234-6060 EMAIL: HRCNCF@GMAIL.COM

THE NEXT MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS
THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 2016, AT 7:00 PM AT PRIDE
COMMUNITY CENTER OF NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA,
3131 NW 13TH ST, GAINESVILLE

The *Guardian* is published quarterly.

