

New council members will push for change in Marana

Marana voters have elected new council members for the first time in almost 10 years.

Russell Clanagan and Roxanne Ziegler easily defeated incumbents Jim Blake and Bob Allen last week by a 2-1 margin.

Now it gets interesting.

Clanagan and Ziegler will join a council that still includes five members they have railed against throughout their campaigns including Blake's daughter Patti Comerford, who in turn has publicly criticized the newly elected pair.

At a recent council meeting, she reminded them that if elected they still only represent one vote each.

The council also includes Tim Escobedo, who had some heated words with Clanagan a few weeks ago.

Escobedo told representatives at the Pima County Democratic Party that they should not be endorsing Clanagan, because Marana council elections are non-partisan.

Clanagan took offense and confronted Escobedo, also a Democrat, about the political matter.

Tim had indicated that he wanted to support me, Clanagan said. Then he switched gears. It was a deliberate lie.

Escobedo and Clanagan both said that the incident wouldn't affect their work as councilmen.

We had some words, Escobedo said. When you're running for election, you say many things. But once you're in office, who knows? Nothing will change as far as my standpoint.

Clanagan has gone to Marana police on another issue.

He filed a police report on May 5 after one of his campaign signs was stolen from a window at Anytime Fitness Health Club in Continental Ranch, where he works part-time.

Two employees from nearby Benner's Grill, which hosted an election night party for Blake and Allen, admitted to stealing the sign.

They're kids. I don't think they've ever voted in their lives, said Richard Benner, the restaurant's owner.

They had a couple of beers and thought it was funny. They had no intentions of hurting (Clanagan's) campaign.

Benner and his wife are members of Anytime Fitness and have a key. The employees grabbed his wife's gym key off the bar before going into the gym and taking the sign, Benner said.

Destiny Duke, one of the employees responsible, called the incident a practical joke.

She and the other employee planned to give the sign back the next day but they suspect a kitchen employee threw it out with the trash.

I have no political feelings at all, Duke said. I don't vote. He's running for town council or whatever. I don't care.

The owners of Anytime Fitness have dropped trespassing charges against the two employees. Clanagan wants to move forward with theft charges.

Clanagan thinks that a meeting to hash out personal differences would do the council good. Dirty politics crept into the campaigns between the primary and general elections, he said.

We need to discuss these issues and put them aside so we can move forward.

Ziegler and Clanagan feel that the voters want them to initiate change in Marana s government.

I made a lot of promises during my campaign and I will keep those promises, Ziegler said, referring to her stance against the council voting to pay for former Mayor Bobby Sutton s legal fees should he be acquitted on extortion-related charges in federal court.

Sutton s trial is set to begin in August.

I would like to bring it back in front of the council, Ziegler said of the vote to indemnify Sutton.

Ziegler has criticized the council for conducting town business out of the public eye.

The town posts a notice on its Web site stating the possibility of a quorum before every 2007 council meeting. Council members usually get together for dinner in a conference room before meetings.

Ziegler said she won t attend these dinners.

People want a change, she said. They re tired of the puppet game.

Escobedo said he ll continue to go to staff with questions about town business. He does this to avoid bickering on the dais, he said.

But if council members want to bicker, let them have at it. Hopefully everybody realizes that we have to work for what s best for this community and we can find a common goal.

The 7-person council before this election had been self-described as a close-knit family, that, in the words of outgoing council member Allen praise(s) in public, criticize(s) in private.

Government should not be run by a clique, Clanagan said. The last thing I want is to be part of a council family.

Ziegler and Clanagan were scheduled to be sworn in at a special May 22 meeting, too late for the EXPLORER s deadline. The agenda also included making presentations to Blake and Allen for their service.

Clanagan will resign his position as planning and zoning commission chairman. Vice Chair Jon Post will assume duties until the vacancy is filled with an applicant and the commission votes on a permanent chairperson.

About the Author

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