

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Losing appointment no excuse for inaction

Now that the ink has dried on the city's reapportionment, the official race though some say it's more apt to call it a coronation — begins for appointments the newly created Ward 5 and Ward 6 council seats.

For the past few months, political pundits and those privy to the city's inner circle have said that appointments have long been set in stone for Ward 5, which contains the city's most concentrated segment of African-Americans with 30 percent, and Ward 6, a northwest ward that slices parts of Summerlin and includes a vast expanse of rural and undeveloped land.

Whether they admit it or not Lawrence Weekly, community liaison to present Ward 3 councilman Gary Reese, and city employee Orlando Sanchez are locks to win appointments to Wards 5 and 6, respectively.

Council members publicly praised Weekly, a high school friend of Mayor Pro Tem Michael McDonald, and Sanchez as knowledgeable insiders who will benefit from a smaller learning curve and who can step in and make an immediate impact. Some councilman and Mayor Oscar Goodman publicly derided aspiring politicians that moved from one area of the city to another, calling them "carpetbaggers." Such a public show of support for one set of candidates and disdain for another set certainly bodes well for Weekly and Sanchez.

Underdog candidates have fought for ink in the papers and air time on the radio and television. Each ward has an interesting field to choose from. To limit the conversation to Ward 5, the council has Weekly, a life-long West Las Vegas and humanitarian, Mujahid Ramadan, a former state drug czar and chief of the self-help organization Nevada Partners, and Gonzaga Law School graduate and Clark County social services specialist Uri Clinton. In a fair world, each would be judged on his own merits. Do you grade contribution — in which Weekly and Ramadan have an edge due to life experience — or is potential factored in? Clinton is only 26.

If the case is as open-and-shut as some people think, it doesn't matter. Weekly wins.

Should conventional wisdom hold form and Weekly and Sanchez are appointed, the defeated mustn't view it as the death knell to their political careers. Instead, they should become more involved in the governing process, assisting the new council officials where they can and holding their feet to the fire when it's called for. Looking at the process from afar could give them the knowledge needed to run a successful election campaign once the seats come up for re-election in two years.

Losing a race where the outcome is pre-determined is nothing to be ashamed of. Sitting on the sidelines with a do-nothing attitude is. Get involved and stay involved.

Only in America:

To protect children, the government can mandate child-proof medicine bottles...



...but not trigger locks on guns.



Nature adds to Black North Carolinians' woes

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Black farmers in North Carolina, along with those in other southern states, have felt under siege for a long time now, as they have battled to save their family farms and run into institutional racism in banks and U.S. Agriculture officials.

The environmental justice movement was launched in North Carolina about 15 years ago when toxic wastes were being dumped in Warren County, a largely poor and African American county in the eastern part of the state; it has more recently focused on the hog farm industry which threatens homes and churches and schools.

But now Hurricane Floyd has brought both of these threats together as African-Americans find themselves battling once more to survive.

Ironically, at the very time the Agriculture Department announced about 15,000 black farmers had filed claims in the class-action suit, which was recently settled, black farmers in North Carolina now face the prospect of losing this year's crops and their farms because of the flooding.

Farmers who lease land will lose their income and probably not be eligible for loans offered by FEMA. Farmers who own their land will be forced to borrow more money to rebuild their homes, and their farmland. Loans won't help many of these already over-extended and poor farmers.

Civil Rights Journal

By Bernice Powell Jackson



Only cash grants may help. Otherwise, many will lose everything in the process, and with only 18,000 African American farmers left in this country (less than 1 percent), that will be a loss not only for the farmers but for the entire black community as well.

Then there is the environmental disaster caused by the flooding. Estimates are that more than 100,000 hogs, 2 million chickens and a half a million turkeys have died in the flooding; and many of those carcasses are floating through streets and communities, contaminating the water supply systems for many counties.

The huge hog farms located throughout eastern North Carolina, many in primarily African American and poor communities, were already posing threats to wells and were polluting the air around the farms. In some counties it is believed there were more hogs than people.

And while state law prohibited the placement of such hog-industry farms less than 2,000 feet from golf courses, those same pigpens can be as close as 1,500 feet

from homes and churches.

Similarly, the waste of millions of chickens being raised in Virginia and North Carolina was thought to be one possible cause of a viral infection of thousands of fish over the past few years. Now that waste may be running throughout communities hit by the floods together with farm chemicals and manure.

Perhaps this natural disaster will force a closer examination of the environmental dangers posed by the huge livestock industry in North Carolina.

Finally, there is the story of the oldest town in the country established by freed slaves, which is now

immersed in flood waters. Princeville is a small village of 2,000 near Tarboro. Freedom Hill was where the freed slaves escaped to and where they founded their own town, a legacy that has recently been reclaimed and publicized.

At the height of the flood, the water stopped about six inches below the stop lights in Princeville and the entire population was evacuated. Several lost their lives, including small children. The still-under-construction boys and girls club was destroyed, along with almost every other building in this historic place.

Will Princeville ever be able to be re-built or will another piece of the history of African-Americans be lost for all time?

Many people, of all racial/ethnic groups have been devastated by the floods of Hurricane Floyd. But African-American North Carolinians are finding themselves fighting a new (See Conspiracy, Page 13)

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Contributing Writers: Loretta Arrington, Lee Brown, Tammy McMahan, Sharon Savage, John T. Stephens III, Fred T. Snyder. Photographers: John Broussard, Kimberly Edwards, Jonathan Olsen.

Ramon Savoy, Publisher, Editor-in-Chief; Lynnette Sawyer, General Manager; Dianna Saffold, Business Manager; Catisha Marsh, Associate Editor; Marcello Sawyer, Copy Editor; Don Snook, Graphics; Ed & Betty Brown, Founders.

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