

GUARDIAN

November 2021

Volume 27, Number 2

Special Election Day is November 16

HRCNCF Queries Candidates for Gainesville City Commission At-Large Seat

The Human Rights Council of North Central Florida (HRCNCF) received written responses to its candidate questionnaire from Gainesville City Commission At-Large B candidates facing off in the November 16 special election.

Verbatim responses to the candidate questionnaire are provided below; they are also available online at hrcncf.org.

The special election was a result of Commissioner Gail Johnson's resignation from her commission seat, effective October 1. She had been re-elected in March of this year. The City Commission set the Nov. 16 election date, with a runoff (if needed) on Jan. 25, 2022.

Five candidates are running to replace Johnson for the at-large seat, including Cynthia Moore Chestnut, Scherwin Henry, Matt Howland, Patrick Ingle, and Gabe Kaimowitz. All candidates except Kaimowitz submitted HRCNCF questionnaire responses.

“Dr. Chestnut's record of support for LGBTQ+ issues in her former public service roles demonstrates the reliability of her advocacy,” said HRCNCF President Flo Turcotte. “Her statement also reflects her keen awareness of the current challenges facing our community at the local, state and national levels,” she added.

Chestnut has a long history of serving in elected office, including for Gainesville City Commission, State Representative, and County Commissioner. She also served as Chair of the Alachua County Democratic Party.

In his questionnaire response, Scherwin Henry explains his vote as city commissioner in 2008 against adding “gender identity” to the city's nondiscrimination ordinance. Leading up to the final vote, Henry had voted twice in support of the proposed ordinance but, at the second and final public hearing, he switched to vote no.

The ordinance passed on a 4-3 vote.

Candidates Matt Howland and Patrick Ingle are running for political office for the first time in the Gainesville area.

Because Gainesville City Commission races are nonpartisan, all registered voters in Gainesville may vote in the at-large race. Call the Alachua County Supervisor of Elections office at 352-374-5252 to have a vote-by-mail ballot sent to you. Vote early in-person at two polling sites (Supervisor of Elections office and Millhopper library) from

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: In-person early voting runs from Nov. 12-14 daily from 9 AM to 6 PM at two locations: Alachua County Supervisor of Elections office, 515 N. Main St., and Millhopper Library, 3145 NW 43rd St.

Vote on Election Day: Vote in your own designated polling precinct from 7 AM to 7 PM on Nov. 16.

Nov. 12-14 daily from 9 AM to 6 PM, or vote in-person at your designated precinct on Election Day, Nov. 16, from 7 AM to 7 PM.

Gainesville City Commission At-Large B Candidate Questionnaire Responses

1. Describe some efforts you have taken locally to support or advocate for LGBTQ rights. Please include anything relevant from your personal and professional background, your support for (or opposition to) LGBTQ nondiscrimination city ordinances and policies, annual proclamations for Pride Days, installation of rainbow sidewalks downtown, and recent anti-LGBTQ laws passed by the State Legislature and Governor (e.g., the anti-transgender sports participation bill).

CYNTHIA MOORE CHESTNUT: LGBTQ+ rights are human rights, and efforts in and out of office must reflect accordingly. As an ally and former elected official, I have been a loyal supporter of the policies and positions of the LGBTQ+ Community throughout my political and personal career.

During my time as a Commissioner, I was a staunch advocate for the annual proclamation for Pride Days and the accompanying activities. The importance of hosting Pride Days within the city cannot be undermined, as they represent more than a celebration of the LGBTQ+ community. These days provide the opportunity to increase visibility and awareness of issues affecting the community. Additionally, as Chair of the Alachua County Democratic Party we routinely ran a voter registration booth on Pride Days to empower LGBTQ+ voters and friends to register or update their voter registration. My time as Chair of the ACDEC was also used to advocate for LGBTQ+ issues. In 2019 we supported the Alachua County ban on conversion therapy for minors. Working with the late Terry Fleming, he presented the ACDEC Resolution to political bodies on the damage that conversion therapy has on LGBTQ+ youth. Its passage was monumental and a big step towards eradicating outdated expectations of sexuality. The same year, the Gainesville City Commission approved the installation of rainbow crosswalks in downtown in honor of National Coming Out Day. I supported the initiative as a symbol of unity within the community. Now we must move forward with a crosswalk for Black Lives Matter and the Transgender Community.

Gainesville has made tremendous progress over the past few years. In 2020, we were named one of the most LGBTQ+ inclusive cities by the National Human Rights Campaign Foundation. However, there have been several efforts at the state level to allow for discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community. Most recently, the Florida Legislature passed the Fairness in Women's Sports Act (SB2012 & HB 1475), which bans transgender folks and women from participating in female sports. As a member of the Democratic Women Clubs of Florida we opposed this legislation and the unjust marginalization of the transgender community. Though Governor Ron DeSantis signed the bill into law, the fight is far from over. Instead, it has lit a fire under our feet for continued advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community.

SCHERWIN L. HENRY: I understand the framing of this question so let's have a frank discussion concerning my vote on the "Transgender Ordinance" that I voted against initially. The reason I took the stance that I did was I felt the City Commission was attempting to circumvent having an open discussion and allowing input from the citizens of Gainesville concerning this ordinance. It seemed to me the City commission was afraid the citizens of Gainesville would not be supportive. When the ordinance was voted on by the citizens, the City Commission's apprehension proved to be unnecessary and without merit. The citizens proved they could be trusted to make the right decision. It seems because of my stance on this issue, the LGBTQ community wants to label me as anti-gay and other related labels. That is far from the truth. I find it intriguing that over the years the LGBTQ community has decided to not speak to me about what I believe or think concerning issues related to the LGBTQ community.

As I served as the District 1 Gainesville City Commissioner, I supported the City's non-discrimination ordinances to ensure fair housing, employment, credit and financial practices. I do support civil unions, domestic

partnerships, and same-sex marriage. The installation of the rainbow sidewalks in recognition of our LGBTQ community is a good thing. It is a good thing that the uniqueness of our city be recognized. As a matter of fact, an effort should be made to recognize the uniqueness of all who contribute to making our wonderful city what it is. Proclamations are important in that they acknowledge and instill a sense of belonging to a community. I have no problem recognizing Pride Days.

I thank you for the opportunity share my thoughts and views. For over 25 years, I have worked on behalf of ALL citizens of our city to bring positive change. I will continue to do that.

**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
OF NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA, INC.**
PO BOX 12912 GAINESVILLE, FL 32604
TEL: 352-234-6060 EMAIL: HRCNCF@GMAIL.COM

The *Guardian* is published quarterly.

MATT HOWLAND: Discriminatory laws designed or passed in an effort to score political points are a shame and should be challenged.

As a former public school teacher, I witnessed firsthand the challenges LGBTQ youth face. I saw the bullying and the derogatory words scribbled on bathroom walls. Victims of abuse were exposed to relentless pressure. Some fought an internal battle to hide their pain while others chose to fight more overtly in a public demonstration. It broke my heart. Every child should feel safe at school.

I proudly support LGBTQ nondiscrimination policies at the local, state, and national levels. Annual proclamations for Pride Days is the least of what we can do to foster an atmosphere of kindness. My wife and I are proud residents of downtown Gainesville and we love the brightly colored rainbow sidewalks. I believe we can do more to partner with local businesses to expand the installation of brightly-colored sidewalks downtown.

PATRICK O. INGLE: As a former NY restaurant owner, I would not discriminate when hiring LGBTQ for chef and other restaurant positions because of their dedication to excellence and commitment to stay and not be a transient worker. I always paid my staff above minimum wage. When issues came on the ballot for LGBTQ, I voted for those issues. We have come a long way where LGBTQ has more protections than in the '60s, '70s and '80s, but more is needed especially in housing discrimination. I also have relatives who associate themselves with LGBTQ, so have first hand knowledge and understanding of the community. One of my tasks, if elected, would be to evaluate and make petitions to change or redact out dated city ordinances. We need a strong police force who is educated about the LGBTQ community and the issues so the police can avoid controversies while in the performance of their duty.