



January 16, 2010

## Parker on Politics: House race heats up with more entrants

*By Betty Parker  
Special to news-press.com*

Lee Memorial Health System board member Jason Moon said this week he will run for the state House seat held by Rep. Nick Thompson, R-Fort Myers, setting up a Republican primary between Moon and Matt Caldwell, who also said he's running.

Democratic businessman Cole Peacock also said Friday he's in the House race. He expects to have those papers filed early next week, and is in the process of closing out his former month-long campaign for Lee County commission.

Moon, who was appointed to the vacant Lee Memorial post in September by Gov. Charlie Crist, said he'll forego running for election to that seat, running instead for the House. The board "has been a great experience, but this is such a good opportunity," Moon said of the House seat.

Moon ran for the hospital board two years ago but lost. What may have been most remarkable about his bid, however, was the almost \$50,000 he raised, largely from medical interests, in an election where most candidates collect less than \$5,000.

Repeated fundraising success seems highly likely. Moon, 30, is corporate administrative director for 21st Century Oncology, where his father-in-law, Danny Dosoretz, is a principal, and a major political fundraiser who's been active for Crist.

Caldwell, meanwhile, is vice chairman of Lee County's Republican Executive Committee, and has been active in Marco Rubio's campaign against Crist for the U.S. Senate.

Thompson, who had four years left before being termed out, is stepping down to run for an open circuit judge position.

## Daltry testing waters

There's been lots of chatter about the likelihood of Wayne Daltry, Lee County's Smart Growth guru who recently announced his resignation, running for office. But Daltry said this week that's not in the picture - at least not for a while.

After his departure from county government the first week of February, Daltry said he plans to spend at least three months joining every group and organization he can, and talking wherever he finds an audience, about the role county government should play in making this a place that remains attractive and appealing.

"I want to talk to people about how this county can achieve the future it deserves," Daltry said, noting he believes many other voters agree with his views. "It's time to stop moping and start working. It's time to start running this county for the 600,000 people who are here, not for the absentee landlords."

The budget crisis that led to Daltry's departure - he believes his job was on the chopping block - is

being used as an excuse to stop taking steps to improve Lee County's quality of life, Daltry said. But if enough residents care and are willing to speak up, he believes county leaders are willing to listen.

"I'm going to do it for three months and see where it goes," he said. After that? "At that time, I'll re-evaluate."

## Off to fast start

Fundraising reports out for the last quarter that ended Dec. 31 show GOP Attorney General candidates Pam Bondi, a Tampa prosecutor, and Holly Benson, a former agency head and legislator, outraised Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottkamp.

Benson, who's been in the race about 60 days, reported \$235,000; Bondi raised \$200,000 in the 30 days since she announced. Kottkamp reported about \$182,000, a bit more than he raised in the previous quarter. It's unusual for two non-incumbents to out raise a sitting lieutenant governor, but Kottkamp still has more money and said he's "continually encouraged by the strong support shown for our campaign."

Bondi's list of donors, meanwhile, generated attention: among them are Al Hoffman of Fort Myers, a former RNC Finance chairman, Mary Jane Martinez, wife of former Republican Gov. Bob Martinez, who's plugged Bondi publicly; and big-league GOP donors including Mel Sembler, Chuck Cobb, and George Steinbrenner. Combine that financial power with the large population of Bondi's home base, and people are taking her first-time candidacy very seriously.

Democratic AG candidate Sen. Dan Gelber of Miami announced raising about \$203,800 in the quarter, less than the \$314,000 he raised in the previous reporting period.

The other Democrat, Sen. Dave Aronberg, D-Greenacres, claimed victory in the fundraising contest, not only by raising about \$254,400 - more than Gelber, and more than Aronberg has raised in the past - but by having more cash left on hand.

Gelber has spent about \$266,500 of the money he's raised, leaving him with about \$403,000 on hand for the rest of the race. Aronberg has spent less; about \$152,500, leaving him with \$503,000 on hand.

## Patriotic art

Republican artist and activist Leoma Lovegrove and Democratic activist and Lee County chairman Will Prather - usually on opposite sides of the political fence - have joined forces for an event both say transcends partisan politics.

An exhibit of patriotic art, mostly about the American flag and titled "Still A Grand Ole Flag," by Lovegrove is on exhibit at Prather's Broadway Palm Dinner Theater art gallery.

The feature is a piece commemorating 9/11 that involves Lovegrove's "Painting Out Loud," which allows others to paint sections expressing their feelings over the events of that day. When the artist wanted to stage it last September, she was unable to find a location that would allow the event and was affordable.

Prather volunteered the theater, and the artwork proceeded. Lovegrove now calls Prather "the real Yankee Doodle boy," and said love of country transcended politics.

"We've always had a playful rivalry," Prather said of Lovegrove. "But although we may differ on certain issues and candidates, we both share a strong love of our country. This is a great example of how certain common themes can transcend and bridge some of our differences."

The show - admission is free - will hang through Feb. 14; there's an artist reception Jan. 23 from 5-8 p.m.

## **Sink fundraiser**

A fundraiser for Democratic CFO Alex Sink's bid for governor will take place Jan. 23 at the Three Oaks Conference Center in Estero.

The event begins with a VIP reception at 3:30 p.m. Co-chairs, who raise at least \$2,500, are Cole Peacock, Ellis Robinson and Edd Weiner. Co-hosts, raising least \$1,000, are Samira Beckwith, Mark Castellano, Joan Crompton, Sunny and Clive Lubner, Will Prather and Bruce Strayhorn. Co-sponsors are Pat Carnevale, Maria Jimenez, Debbie Jordan and Barbara Mainster.

Admission donations range from \$25 to \$250.

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