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The Washington Post

November 19, 2006 Sunday
Final Edition

SECTION: Southern Maryland Extra; T02

LENGTH: 2213 words

HEADLINE: Now, the Common Ground The c ...

BODY:

The campaign is over. For some voters, it's not a minute too soon. We were all tired of the negative television commercials, mailers and ads. Millions of dollars were spent on negative attack mailers and letters. My campaign took the high road and kept with a positive campaign, talking about how to improve Charles County. I think people appreciated a positive approach; I am grateful the voters selected me by an even larger margin than they did four years ago.

I want to thank all of the volunteers who spent so much time working for me. I also congratulate my colleagues in Charles County who were victorious in the state and local elections. To those who weren't successful, it takes a lot of courage and energy to run an effective campaign. Yes, there was an anti-Republican sentiment nationally. But Democratic candidates and campaigns in Charles County worked hard and were focused on the issues. Voters rewarded us.

Now, it's time to put the campaign behind us and work together for the citizens in Charles County and the state of Maryland. I personally look forward to fighting for your interests at the State House, working with Gov.-elect Martin O'Malley and the legislature on making health care more accessible and affordable for working families, protecting our environment, reducing traffic congestion and bringing Charles County together to end hate crimes and promote economic prosperity. There are many thorny issues to debate -- despite the strong showing of one party. People have differing points of view around the state, within our county and even within political parties.

Before you know it, there will be vigorous debate in Annapolis and La Plata, perhaps heated at times. This is healthy. While good governing means you fight for your priorities, you then work with others to find a compromise that works for the common good.

It's time to put the campaign battles behind us and focus on governing.

Thomas "Mac" Middleton

Democratic state senator

Waldorf

I think it is time to take a moment and, first, thank those who ran for office. The need for leadership has never been greater, and now that the choices are made, it's time to look ahead and support those who have chosen to step up.

Second, I was amazed to hear about some of the amounts that were raised to plaster a candidate's name and picture in front of us, especially at the local level. There needs to be a cap on spending in Charles County and its environs, as this will only get worse before it gets better.

Finally, I have to strongly disagree with Philip Rucker's assessment of the election results. For myself, it had nothing to do with ". . . strongly favor[ing] Democrats" [Extra, Nov. 12]. It had to do with the president, the mishandling of the war and the 2,800-plus voters that will never be heard from again.

Charles County is becoming a vibrant and very desirable place to live. Our new leaders need to be forward-thinking and aware of our needs over the next few years. Whether it is schools, transportation or taxes, the leadership needs to think outside of the box and work toward solutions that will benefit all.

Rick Young

Waldorf

First, let us cleanse ourselves of all the bitterness and negative thoughts that some of us may have had during the campaigning. Let us start anew. We have a lot of work to do, and whether you lost or won, we must all pull together and get our county and lives together.

I was very fortunate to get an invitation to attend the Charles County Arts Alliance seminar that was recently at the College of Southern Maryland. The topic was a vision for the year 2020. It was about the wonderful things that we hoped to accomplish during the next 20 years and further. There were all kinds of talented people attending. We had artists, musicians, theatrical directors, designers, electronic technicians, computer programmers and many others of the arts. And some of the things that I heard proposed were overwhelming.

Right after that, I was also invited to the Economic Development Summit 2020, and I was pleased to find that all these bankers, land developers, educators, engineers and other business people were also discussing and planning for the next 20 years and further.

It was encouraging and inspiring for me to see all these people working and looking forward to the welfare of all the people in the years to come. This means that, in spite of the negatives in our lives, it is refreshing to see people discuss the wonders of the world to come, and more than wonderful to know that we can do all these things if we all forget our negatives and work together for the future. So let's not point the finger at each other and issue blame. Forget the past and let's live and work together for a better future.

Lemon H. Moses Jr.

Waldorf

On Dec. 2, American Community Properties Trust will once again sponsor the St. Charles Christmas Parade for the Christmas Connection, an annual event designed to kick off the holiday season by garnering support for this extremely

worthwhile charitable endeavor.

The Christmas Connection is a multiagency charitable effort -- including Children's Aid Society, Department of Social Services, Department of Community Services Office on Aging, Salvation Army, Tri-County Youth Services and New Church -- that provides food and gifts to the elderly and less-fortunate families in Charles County. This year, this outstanding charitable endeavor will make Christmas brighter for nearly 2,000 children and more than 700 families in Charles County.

ACPT is proud to support the Christmas Connection. This year's parade will include a host of great entertainment, including the Westlake High School marching band, equestrians from Fair Weather Farm, the Stoddert Middle School chorus, the Charles County Sheriff's Office, the Waldorf Volunteer Fire Department, classic cars from the Tri-County Cruisers, the American Salute Twirlers, performing dogs with the White Plains 4-H club, and hot chocolate courtesy of the Southern Maryland Chapter of the American Red Cross and ACPT. Some surprise guests will only add to the fun and excitement of supporting this great cause.

The year's parade is Dec. 2 on Village Street in the Smallwood Village Center starting with entertainment at 1:30 p.m. It is a great way to start your Christmas season, and there is still time for community groups to participate. But whether you march or simply attend the parade, we encourage you to bring an unwrapped toy or gift to donate to the Christmas Connection. Like the different agencies of the Christmas Connection, let's all work together to make this Christmas a merry one for every family in Charles County.

For more information about the Christmas Connection, call Charles County Children's Aid Society at 301-645-1561. On behalf of the Christmas Connection, we hope to see you at the St. Charles Christmas Parade on Dec. 2.

Craig J. Renner

Assistant vice president, ACPT

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St. Charles

The article in the Nov. 12 Southern Maryland Extra about the election of Rex Coffey as the next sheriff of Charles County causes me great concern ["Obsession Pays Off in Sheriff's Race"]. After watching this campaign and the previous two between Mr. Coffey and Fred Davis, I could find little to cause me to not support Sheriff Davis.

Now we hear from Mr. Coffey that the real reason he ran for a third time is that he was "obsessed" with beating Sheriff Davis. Mr. Coffey, please be very careful as you begin your new job. People who are "obsessed" about anything often act in a manner that causes them and those around them much harm. Your obsession may very well cause you to take actions and make decisions that not only harm the sheriff's department mission but also harm the very people you are going to be sworn to protect.

Peter B. Traggorh Sr.

La Plata

Two recent events regarding the La Plata police department have prompted me to comment to the residents of La Plata, but county people should also be aware of what is going on.

First, I attended the monthly meeting of the La Plata Town Council on Nov. 14. Fewer than 10 people attended. The new acting town manager was not in attendance. And neither was the town's chief of police. At the end of the meeting, I tried to bring this up, but I was told that the meeting was over. No comments again from the town's people. In

fact, the town council passed a new ordinance early that night, changing or reducing the amount of time a resident can address the council from 10 minutes to only three minutes.

Second, I noted that the mayor has published a letter responding to a resident, Richard Maron, defending the need for a separate town police department, which would cost La Plata taxpayers about \$1 million annually. The mayor missed the point of the letter. While Mayor [Gene] Ambrogio is right to cite the need for a police department because of terrorist threats, gang action or criminal activity, he fails to respond to several questions.

It would seem to me that the federal Department of Homeland Security, the Maryland State Police and the Charles County Sheriff's Office not only have the appropriate resources for this, but they are also deeply involved in protecting the town residents from such threats. We do pay taxes for this.

I think the mayor misses the point. I have been waiting for some time now for solid answers to questions raised about the value of La Plata having a separate police force, such as:

- * Why is there no Web site for the police?
- * Why don't they report its activity at town council meetings? No report was given on Nov. 14.
- * How many joint calls were made with the sheriff's office?
- * Has the tax differential problem been resolved so double taxation is not involved with the police services?
- * A retreat between the two police forces was promised a long time ago, so why do we have to wait until January for such an important meeting?

Why do we need a police force when the sheriff's office handles calls and responds to enforcement matters in the town limits? Why can't we work like the town of Indian Head, which has no separate force?

It is not our local officers that are the problem, it is the town's lack of leadership standing in the way to make them more productive and proactive to the public safety needs of our growing population.

In fact, just this week, the city of Brunswick, Md., announced the future of its local police force is uncertain. City officials are meeting with its residents to decide if it will turn over all such services to the Frederick County Sheriff's Office. Yes, the residents are involved, unlike how our town council treats its voters. It is time for our town leadership, which is still operating without a full-time town manager since this spring, to give credence to the taxpayers. But, remember, you only have three minutes to question the council members at a meeting. Bring your stopwatch.

I trust the newly elected county officials will work more closely with the La Plata officials on this and other issues, such as water and sewer problems that are being ignored.

I ask again why the joint meeting of the town and county leaders is not videotaped for future viewing. That is another serious issue that needs attention in the future.

Harlan F. Lang

La Plata

I have written to Edith J. Patterson numerous times during her tenure on the Charles County Board of Commissioners in regard to various issues. These issues are of great concern to me: the environment, including the water supply; development of our remaining farmlands; the stadium; and the ice rink. My primary concern regarding the ice rink and stadium is that millions of taxpayers dollars will be used to fund these facilities, while at the same time property taxes continue to rise.

Commissioner Patterson has not once responded to any of my valid concerns. In fact, I specifically requested the "favor of a reply" in some of my letters but to no avail. Commissioner Patterson's constituents deserve no less than to have their concerns answered in a timely manner.

As a representative of District 2, Commissioner Patterson has a responsibility to respond to any and all correspondence from her constituents. Since I've always included my mailing address and phone number, she is well aware that I reside in her district. Furthermore, I have always been respectful in my letters, so there is no reason that I should not have had the courtesy of a reply.

My latest letter was sent to her on Nov. 9. I sent this e-mail after reading an article in the Maryland Independent. The content of the article compelled me to send the referenced letter to Commissioner Patterson, as it contained some quoted comments attributed to her. These comments were reportedly in regard to her opponent in the recent election. In my opinion, Commissioner Patterson's reported comments were both derogatory and false.

I would like to ask Commissioner Patterson . . . why can't you provide me with answers to my concerns?

. . . Much has been said lately about Commissioner Patterson making history in Charles County. Well, I'd like to ask you, is she making history for the right reasons? Is she representing her district? I, for one, don't think so.

Cheryl E. Thomas

Welcome

LOAD-DATE: November 19, 2006