POLITICS *from page 1A*

"Just be honest"

"I was essentially told that Geraldine was uncomfortable speaking in public," Greene said.

The idea that Lucio has an aversion to speaking in a public debate was sparked when a series of scheduled forums that were to host all three candidates — Woodbury, Miltenberger and Lucio — were cancelled or modified for various reasons. As a result, the only real discussion with all three candidates together occurred during Coast Radio's recording of the Tuesday, Oct. 9, broadcast of its "Our Town" series, when host George Henry interviewed the three candidates simultaneously.

"We started the interview, and I told them, 'Talk about some of your qualities and why you think you should be elected,'" George said.

After Miltenberger and Woodbury gave their answers, George turned to Lucio.

"She was very nervous. She started to answer the question, then she froze for a minute. Then I said, 'Don't worry, take your time.' We could see she was uneasy," he said.

George went to the next question, deciding to ask Lucio last and provide her more time to think about her answer. "I could tell she was still very uncomfortable."

He doesn't remember whether it was the second or third question, but at some point, Lucio said that she needed to use the restroom, saying she did not feel good. The interview was paused as the group waited for Lucio to return.

"I took it as nerves because, when she came back in, she still had trouble answering," George said.

At the end of the interview, George told the candidates that he would not take any content out of the interview but would edit it for time, cutting out all the pauses.

"They were all okay with that, so I didn't see any problem with it," he said.

Along with Lucio, Woodbury cancelled events as well, citing prior engagements out of town. The Siuslaw News, which generally does not participate in election forums, also attempted to set up a debate between the candidates, but Lucio said she was uncomfortable with debating. She did not go on record giving her reasons.

"I was surprised, because I consider Geraldine to be a little more outgoing," Greene said. "I know her in social situations, and we have some mutual friends in common. I just assumed that there was no issue as far as her being capable, qualified and prepared [to speak]."

So, Greene decided to talk with her about this issue.

"I do believe that I had a right to go — to ask her face to face — because I don't know her well enough," he said. "And I wanted her to be able to tell me the truth. And she did. And I was very grateful."

Greene states that when he talked with Lucio, he learned that she was unaware of what's expected of a city councilor and what the process will be.

"I explained this in great detail: The different parts of money that we use to manage the city, and that while the job has nothing to do with politics, it has everything to do with serving the community, being fiscally responsible and making sure we don't violate our ethics and get the city involved," said Greene. "The job entails 40 hours a month of backstory reading and research, so that when you get up in those two-hour meetings every other Monday, you know your stuff already."

As for the tenor of the conversation, Greene stated it was friendly in nature, and that he was in no way looking for her to get out of the race.

"I hugged Geraldine," he said. "I think the world of Geraldine. And there was in no way any kind of 'gotcha' attack sentiment at all. Not at all."

It's at that point Greene contacted Lacer — who had been having similar concerns — about his talk with Lucio.

> **"Just from what I've observed, and I'm not a political expert, but we have chaos going on at a national level and, to some degree, at the state level. It's either one bashing the other, or another bashing them. As I say, the 20 or 19 years I've been here, we've never had this in our community, but all of a sudden, we do. I believe [the email sent to council candidate Geraldine Lucio is] politically motivated."**
>
> **— Joe Henry,**
> ***City of Florence Mayor***

"No harm, no foul"

Before Greene's meeting with Lucio, he and Lacer had shared some of their concerns about what they had been hearing regarding Lucio's aversion to public speaking, which was an important topic for Lacer. To her, public speaking is vital to the position.

"As a councilor, not only do you do a variety of actual public speaking, going to talk to different groups about whatever city business, you also, every two weeks — up on a diocese, on camera — speak in front of a room full of people. You have to make decisions, you have to deliberate in public with fellow counselors and make difficult decisions. You have to publicly work through compromises with your fellow counselors. You have to be able to do that work to be an effective city councilor," Lacer said.

And the microphone is always on. Even if there are no audience members, meetings are recorded, either through video and/or audio, and are available to the public.

Ensuring a candidate is ready for the position is something both Lacer and Greene said is important to them, as well as the amount of preparation they feel is necessary before each meeting.

"I have no personal knowledge of it, but I will say, at times in council, it has been apparent to me that one or more of my fellow councilors have appeared not to have read the packet because of the comments or questions they have asked," said Lacer.

Given that Lacer is known for her research on matters facing the council, it stands to reason that replacing her with someone with a willingness to be just as thorough could be necessary in keeping a balance.

After speaking with Greene about his conversation with Lucio, Lacer felt their concerns had been confirmed.

"I respect and admire what I know about her," Lacer said. "My feeling was, maybe she had signed up for something that ended up being more than she realized. I felt like throwing a life ring to someone who had maybe gotten in over their head."

Lacer admits they were "acquaintances, not friends," so there was no occasion that the two would happen to meet, so Lacer decided to write an email.

"My comfort in communication is writing versus talking, just a personal preference," said Lacer, who wrote the following email, obtained by the Siuslaw News, to Lucio on Friday, Oct. 12.

Dear Geraldine, how are you holding up? You've been on my mind recently. I'm writing because I am concerned. I have been told by multiple folks in town that you are struggling with a fundamental requirement of being a city councilor: Public speaking. If that is true, and you are not comfortable speaking to a room full of people, I'm asking that you withdraw from the election now, Geraldine. I believe that you care about Florence and that you want what is best for the community. It would be a terrible disservice to our citizens for you (to) continue in the election, if you are unable to serve effectively.

There is no shame in changing your mind based on new information. You may not have realized how much public speaking is required for Councilors; or you may not have recognized just how uncomfortable you are with public speaking. Most people are not comfortable with public speaking!

Now that you have a better understanding, it's perfectly okay to say: 'I didn't understand what the position takes and I've realized this isn't what I want to do; I've decided I am not running for council; due to new information, I am withdrawing my bid for election; I've decided I am called to serve the community in a different way; etc.'

I know this won't be easy, Geraldine. In the past, I have changed my mind and quit positions that I had agreed to take on, after telling everyone that I was going to do the thing. It's not easy, but it is the path of integrity. If you know that continuing on with what you said you were going to do, is not be the right decision for you, then the only ethical thing to do is stop. No harm, no foul.

Thank you for being willing to run for council, Geraldine. I admire your courage and your willingness to serve. And I trust that you will find the path to service that is the right fit for you. If I can help you with anything, please let me know.

The letter specifically asked Lucio to drop out of the race, a sentiment that Lacer said she had intended.

"Yes, I was suggesting that it would be better for the city if she would drop [out]. Our citizens deserve to have an effective, capable, functioning city councilor," said Lacer. "I would say that an in-person conversation would probably have been more appropriate, perhaps, but it wouldn't have been easier for me because, again, I prefer to write. Still, to this date, I have had zero response from Geraldine and did not get any response from the email."

Though Lacer said she meant the letter to be informational and persuasive, it could also be viewed as one sided. Beyond the question of how she went about it, there is the question of whether Lacer should have done it at all. Does a sitting councilor have the right to make such comments to a candidate?

Cease and Desist

Regarding the incident, Lucio told the Siuslaw News, "It's unfortunate that this has occurred. I would like this to be put behind us, move on and focus on the important issues facing our community. It will continue to be my goal to work with everyone for the betterment of our community."

That is the only comment Lucio provided regarding the email. However, Mayor Henry said he felt it was important for the public to know what had occurred — something which may not have happened since Lacer sent the correspondence to Lucio using her personal email.

"I deliberately did not send it from what I knew to be a public-record email," Lacer said. "I did not send it with the intent that it would be public. It was a private communication."

The Siuslaw News was first introduced to the email by Councilor Woodbury, who agreed to show Lacer's letter in the context of a larger email chain. That chain included Henry who, using his City of Florence email address, forwarded the letter to other councilors and Florence City Manager Erin Reynolds. By doing so, the correspondence became public record, to which Henry included the following comments:

The following email was sent today from City Councilor Susy Lacer to the City Council Candidate, Geraldine Lucio. Council President Joshua Greene made a personal visit to Ms. Lucio's place of business two days ago having basically the same conversation.

These communications by sitting city councilors are totally inappropriate and may well be more than inappropriate. To say the least, I am extremely disappointed to think that members of our city council would take steps to influence an election in our community. Candidate Lucio is very upset, so I strongly recommend that you cease and desist from this course of action.

Greene responded briefly to Henry's email with the following:

Bottom line is, Geraldine is terrific in so many ways! She is not ready for council. She needs to learn and work her way up. Like the rest of us have. She ain't got the chops … Yet.

Henry was the first person involved with the incident to speak with the Siuslaw News. A week prior, he had received some pushback regarding a Guest Viewpoint he wrote in The Siuslaw News (Oct. 13) concerning the city collecting funding from the state. Some readers considered the statements to be partisan in nature, antithetical to the ethics of a bipartisan council. He later clarified it was his personal opinion, and a clarification appeared in the Oct. 17 edition's Opinion page.

"It's part of our council code of conduct that we identify the fact that we're not speaking on behalf of the city," he said. "There are people that feel that the mayor can't have an opinion and can't state that opinion. So, understand that any comments past this point are strictly my opinion, and not official on behalf of the City of Florence."

After clarifying his position, Henry echoed the comments he made in the email.

"I think the actions of a few city councilors, which may or may not be criminal, are very much unethical and inappropriate," he said.

The Siuslaw News contacted City Manager Reynolds to find if there were any city or state codes, laws or regulations that the councilors broke in speaking with Lucio. None were found, and their actions appear to be legal. But for Henry, the issues the email brought up go beyond concrete laws.

"My reasoning behind [releasing the email] was that a candidate for city council made us aware of an email, basically attempting to shame her into resigning from the campaign," he said. "I thought that was definitely a campaign issue."

Regarding the question of whether or not Lucio was qualified to hold a council seat, Henry quoted the city's code.

"If you read our city code and city charter, the only qualifications are to live in the city for one year, to attend meetings and vote 'yea' or 'nay,'" he said. "Nowhere does it state that being a gifted public speaker is required. We have councilors on our council who rarely speak, and we have had some in the past. And that's fine. They don't have to speak."

To the mayor's point, former councilor George Lyddon rarely spoke in meetings. And Woodbury, who was appointed to the remainder of Lyddon's term, is also known to be quiet, though he has begun speaking more regularly in meetings. And public speaking is something that a candidate can learn.

But the question remains: If a sitting councilor does have concerns regarding a candidate's ability to perform their job, how should they go about it voicing it? And should they?

"I think a councilor, or a mayor for that matter, can put signs in their yard," Henry said.

See **POLITICS** *page 9A*

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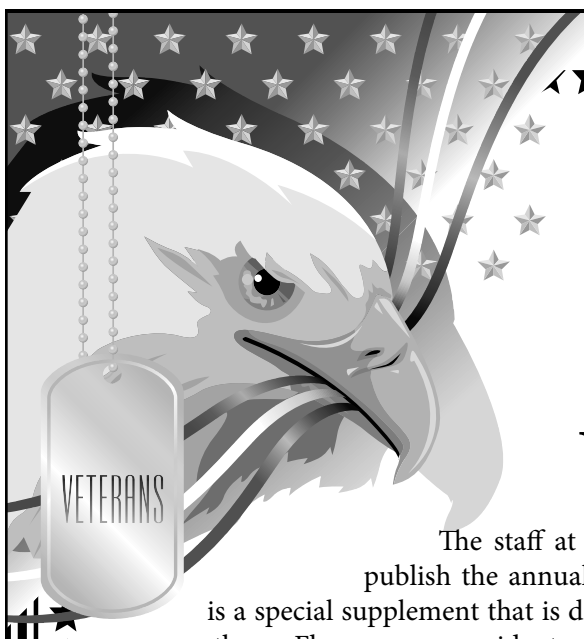

In Honor of All Veterans

The staff at the Siuslaw News is preparing to publish the annual Veterans Day publication, which is a special supplement that is devoted to all military veterans who currently are Florence-area residents or have a connection to this area. It will be printed in the Wednesday, Nov. 7, 2018 edition, before Veterans Day, annually held each Nov. 11.

If you are interested in sharing your military background information in the annual tribute publication, or in updating information that we have published previously, please complete this form and submit it to the Siuslaw News. Service photographs are also welcome.

Submit forms and photos by email to mberg@thesiuslawnews.com, by regular mail to Siuslaw News, Attn: Misty Berg, P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439; or drop off materials at the Siuslaw News office in Historic Old Town Florence, 148 Maple St.

If your profile was published previously Veterans tribute and you do not wish to make any changes to the profile, there is no need to resubmit this form or your military information.

Please be sure that all materials are carefully labeled with your name and phone number and are submitted by Friday, **Nov. 2, 2018.**

Thank you for participating in this project to remember and honor our veterans.

Name: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

Branch of Service: _____

Rank Achieved (optional): _____

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Where did you serve? _____

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Has your veteran information been published previously in the Siuslaw News Veterans Publication?
YES NO

Do we have your military photo on file? YES NO

(Note: If you have submitted photos in the past, we will still have them on file.)