

POLITICS from page 8A

“They can put stickers on their car,” Henry continued. “We’re certainly welcome to go to rallies to support candidates, post on social media and do the things that any average citizen would do. But I don’t think it’s fair for a sitting city councilor to make a decision for the city of Florence. There’s nobody in town that doesn’t know that Joshua Greene [and Susy Lacer] are city councilors. Implicit, therein, is the perception — whether it’s stated or in fact exists — that, ‘Oh gosh, the city council doesn’t want me on the city council.’”

When told of the mayor’s response, Lacer disagreed. “I’m very intentional about what email address I’m using when I send messages,” she said. “So, this message was sent from my personal work email to Geraldine. It was not sent from my city council email. In my mind, I was not speaking as a city councilor, but as a resident

of Florence, a fellow citizen, an acquaintance of Geraldine’s ... I obviously didn’t intend for my email to Geraldine to become public record, as it has become. It was a private communication. I think people communicate differently in private than they do in official campaign literature.”

In Henry’s view, this wasn’t about a councilor giving advice to a candidate. This was about a sitting councilor’s attempting to get a candidate to drop out of the race.

“If you read the words in that letter, ‘there’s no shame in stepping down...’ Well, to me, that infers that there’s shame in staying in the race. In effect, if Ms. Lucio steps down, that makes it an uncontested race where their candidate gets elected by default,” he said.

Henry’s use of the phrase “their candidate” was just one of several indicators that prompted the Siuslaw News to delve deeper into the possible partisanship nature of the current

city council race.

“ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL”

Theories regarding the “political makeup” of the non-partisan council abound. Which

With Miltenberger cast as the liberal and Lucio cast as the conservative, this council race could be seen as a fight for the ideological makeup of the city council itself, i.e., if Lucio wins,

her politics. I don’t know Joshua, either. I really don’t know them really well.”

Miltenberger is openly active in the Democratic community, taking part in many political

ken, I look at what we’re doing and try and look at my justifications.”

Preisler does not always agree with Lacer and Greene, pointing out that they often disagree on major decisions. For example, when voting on the remodeling City Hall, Preisler was the only council member to vote against it.

“My concern was cost,” said Preisler, who has also voted unanimously with the rest of the council and at odds with his political leanings. One instance occurred last January, when Miltenberger applied for a vacant city council position to replace outgoing councilor Lyddon, Preisler — the only council member openly endorsing Miltenberger in this election — voted with the rest of the council to temporarily appoint Woodbury instead.

Preisler said he was not aware of any of the issues surrounding Lucio, Greene and Lacer when the email situation was occurring, and that he found out about the incident when reading Henry’s email.

“I didn’t think it was the appropriate step [to release the email],” he said. “It’s kind of washing your laundry in public. If it were me, I would not have done that.”

When Preisler was asked if Lacer suggesting to Lucio that she step down was inappropriate, he stated “no.”

“If Susy was staying on the board, then it could possibly be construed that way,” he said. “Knowing that she is not going to be on the board, then I think she’s looking for the best person to take her place. ... Susy did not go out and run a campaign against Geraldine. Susy was talking directly to Geraldine.”

Based on the premise that Greene was trying to help Lucio, and that Lacer was expressing an opinion — with neither one looking to influence the election politically — then where did politics come in? As part of its reporting, the Siuslaw News has obtained and utilized public records including candidate files, court records and financial statements in an effort to answer that question. Unfortunately, however, the representation of one side of this discussion will still be limited.

After speaking with Henry at the beginning of this report, the Siuslaw News began receiving questions from the public about his involvement with the Lucio and Woodbury campaigns. After gathering information from multiple sources, the Siuslaw News asked to speak with Henry on that subject and others, but he declined to comment. So too did Katie Prosser, Lucio’s campaign press agent, when asked questions about the campaign.

Woodbury has yet to respond to emails, and Lucio has not agreed to be interviewed.

Which leaves Preisler to speculate where the partisanship came in.

“Somehow, or another, the [email] went from Geraldine to the mayor,” he said. “That’s where the partisanship, in my mind, comes in.”

“I just feel that the total story isn’t being told,” Greene said. “And it’s being jaded by these ‘gotcha’ politics — Maureen vs. Geraldine, the Republicans vs. the Democrats, and Joe being so focused on thinking he needs a partisan council — is to me distracting. I don’t want to look at it like ‘I got one Democrat, or two Democrats or three Democrats.’ I haven’t thought about our council, in that way, until lately. The last eight to 10 months, I started seeing it that way, because that’s what Joe keeps presenting to me. I’ve just been blind to it.”

At that point, he paused.

“I know I’m giving you a lot of stuff to think about,” he said. “You have any questions here?”

In Part II of this series: The campaigns of Lucio and Miltenberger, and the potential precedent being set for the future of local, non-partisan elections.

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— Joshua Greene,
Florence City Councilor

explains why some in the community have come to place particular importance on this year’s race. The general consensus goes like this: As it stands right now, councilors Greene, Lacer and Ron Preisler make up a “liberal” voting bloc in the council while Woodbury and Henry make up a “conservative” voting bloc. With Lacer leaving the council, that would leave a 2/2 split between conservatives and liberals (should Woodbury be reelected.) Therefore, who wins this election could theoretically tip the direction of the council.

This leads to questions of the political leanings of candidates Miltenberger and Lucio.

Miltenberger is a self-professed champion for the Florence Democratic Club. Her political views, as well as some of the legal and political issues that have revolved around her campaign, will be looked at in part two of this series in the Saturday, Oct. 27, edition of the Siuslaw News.

For Lucio, she generally speaks in nonpartisan terms, defining her politics as independent, though that is an assumption that may be in doubt. Lucio has a strong conservative base, is financially backed by Republican donors and, as the Siuslaw News has found, is receiving help from a conservative campaign manager and treasurer — both of whom live and operate outside the Siuslaw region. More of that will also be covered in Saturday’s edition.

the council tips conservative; if Miltenberger wins, it swings liberal.

In his initial interview, Henry framed the argument in a way that closely mirrors what many agree has been a breakdown of bipartisanship in the country.

“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,” he said. “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 is] politically motivated.”

But when pressed on the suggestion from his earlier comment that Miltenberger was Greene and Lacer’s “their candidate,” he backtracked.

“I won’t get into that,” he said. “I think there’s clearly. ... No, I can’t answer that question. I wouldn’t say that. I would just say that the results of them shaming [Lucio] into stepping down would, in effect, get the other candidate elected.”

There is little evidence that Miltenberger, Greene and Lacer are actively working together. The councilors names don’t appear on the candidate’s advertisements, and they are rarely seen in the same circles.

“I seriously don’t know Susy,” Miltenberger said. “She’s our liaison to EMAC (the Environmental Management Advisory Committee), and I know her through that, but I don’t know

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