

COMMUNITY from page 7A

“I’m not political”

“When Maureen was first up for the board, the mayor actively disliked her, and expressed it and attacked her during the process,” Preisler said in an interview with the Siuslaw News.

It was Jan. 18. Miltenberger was applying for an open position on the city council, left vacated by George Lyddon, who relocated out of Florence. Henry began the meeting cordially. The field had been whittled down to four, all of whom were interviewed that day: Dan Lofy, Woody Woodbury, Joel Marks and Miltenberger. The recorded interviews are part of public record and were sourced for the following recounting.

“I’ll kick this off, and ask the first one: What unique skills, experience, or qualifications can you bring to the City Council position?” asked Henry.

Miltenberger listed a number of jobs she had done over her life; teacher, tutor and “doing social work kinds of things.”

Greene asked if there were any other questions on the topic, before moving on to his own question for Miltenberger.

“I do have a couple,” Henry said. “I was particularly interested in your service on the Canby City Council.”

Miltenberger replied, “Yes, I

was going to mention that later but, sure.”

“Well, I didn’t know quite what question that would fit into, but it seems to fit into this as far as qualifications, so you can tell us a bit about that?” Henry asked.

On her application for the Florence City Council, Miltenberger wrote under prior governmental experience, “Canby, Oregon: City Council Appointed in 1991. Elected 1992 to 1994.

Miltenberger said that she was a single mother with a full-time job, saw an ad in the paper for the Canby City Council position and then applied.

It’s at that point she began speaking matter-of-factly about being recalled from her position because of her opposition to Measure 3-2, a charter amendment that sought to prohibit special rights for homosexuals, according to a December 1993 article in the Canby Herald.

“I said, ‘I don’t discriminate against people, ... I don’t do that.’ I refuse to follow that and discriminate against people. I said I wouldn’t do it, and another guy on the council said the same,” Miltenberger said.

Because of their opposition to the measure, the electorate held a vote to remove Miltenberger and fellow councilor Joe Driggers. Only half the city voted, and the approval to remove Miltenberger had a margin of 62

votes, according to the Canby Herald.

“Even though it may seem like a negative that I was recalled, it was something I was proud of,” she said. “I stood up for something that I believed in and felt good about.”

“Okay,” said Henry, and the questioning continued; what she thought of the issues facing Florence, her involvement in community activities. Miltenberger spoke in length about her work with EMAC.

“You mentioned that you are a part of the EMAC committee, are you actually a member?” Henry asked. “You mentioned a number of other organizations. Are you on any other committees or boards or non-profit boards?”

“Not actually, no,” Miltenberger replied.

However, on her application, she listed EMAC, Siuslaw Vision and other organizations. But she neglected to mention that she was the vice-chair of the Florence Area Democratic Club.

“So, have you served on other entities?” asked Henry.

“No, no actual boards,” she said. “Several different committees. But no, no boards or civic kinds of things.”

The question period moved on, and everything seemed normal until the very end, after Miltenberger’s final statements.

“I do have one follow up question,” Henry said. “When I asked you specifically if you were on, or have been on since you’ve been in Florence, any other boards, committees, 501(3)c’s, you said, ‘No.’”

Miltenberger answered, “I’m a member of the Democratic Party, I just didn’t want to bring that up. Yes, I’m the vice chair of the Democratic Party. I just didn’t want to get political. ... There’s also some committees that I’m a chair of. Actually, two that I’m the chair of.”

“Why didn’t you mention that on your application?” Henry asked.

“Because I didn’t want to be political,” Miltenberger repeated.

“Did you read the part on there that says, ‘That all information that is provided on this form is true, to the best of my knowledge?’” Henry asked.

“Everything that was on that form is true,” Miltenberger answered. “And I would be very happy to bring that up. I don’t have any problem discussing it all. I’ve been a member of the Democratic Party, but I was a part of the committee of this group. And six months into it I became vice-chair. I’m very proud of it, and very happy, but I just didn’t want this to be a political discussion.”

Preisler agreed, saying, “And I would take that attitude as being correct, too. This is not a political application.”

“Oh really?” Henry said.

“Well, gee.”

“Yes, I don’t think it is a political issue,” Preisler said.

“You don’t think omission is an issue?” Henry continued. “You also spent a whole paragraph talking about your time on the city council, but you didn’t mention the fact that you were recalled until I specifically brought up your service on the council.”

The application for the position did not specifically state that candidates needed to list if they had ever been recalled, and Miltenberger was open about the issue when asked.

“She did mention it during her presentation,” Preisler said.

“She did, though not until I brought it up,” Henry said. “We were ready to go onto the next subject, so I came back with a follow-up question. ... I’m just curious as to why, especially since you have limited experience on committees, why you would not list that on the application?”

There was a long pause, then Miltenberger said, “I’m not political. I’m really running as a citizen of this community, and I’m not running as a Democrat or a Republican.”

“Okay,” Henry said. “If nobody has anything else, thank you very much.”

As the council went to break,

Preisler said, “Really?”

At a city council meeting four days after the interview, Miltenberger stated in public comments that she believed she was verbally attacked by Henry, saying she hadn’t disclosed being in the Democratic Club because she felt the council was supposed to be non-partisan. She stated that she didn’t appreciate the insinuation that she was a liar, and told Henry, “You made me feel there was something I should confess to, and not something to be proud of.”

Finally, she said the mayor should “listen to the things that people have to say. Don’t just turn them away and make them feel bad because they don’t believe the same things you do.”

As she walked back to her seat, multiple members of the audience applauded.

How one views these events largely depends on one’s feelings toward the two. For those who dislike Miltenberger, Henry could be viewed as a shrewd tactician, perceiving her to be untrustworthy and caught in a lie.

“She was not as forthcoming as she should have been,” Preisler said. “But she didn’t want to wave the flag in front of the bull, basically. With Maureen’s background, it’s as far as I’m concerned excellent. Is she a perfect person? No, she’s not. None of us are.”

Greene said, “What everybody wants to do is catch you in a lie. Once you do that, then you’re not trusted. Why was it necessary to out Maureen? They tried to use a gimmick to tarnish her name and make it look like she’s a liar.”

With Miltenberger claiming she was attempting to keep politics out of the discussion, and Henry outing her political ties, it appeared both sides believed the same thing: Partisanship doesn’t belong in the council election.

Unfortunately, it became a factor anyway — as well as harassment from both sides.

you get that!”

Two pictures of rifles were placed above Lucio’s head.

On the right bottom corner of the flier, the Florence Liberty Alliance logo was placed, with the phrase “And all ‘Sovereign’ Nationalists invite you to VOTE TRUMP: MAKE FLORENCE ‘GREAT’ because ‘We love everybody, ‘even you!’”

The fliers had been disseminated across Old Town Florence sometime during the previous night. It is unknown who created and distributed the flier, but the reasons were clear — to administer public ridicule and shame.

It was after this incident that Tomeny came to speak with the Siuslaw News, providing new information about the Lucio campaign and the issues he felt her supporters are facing.

“The reason I’m here is there’s a lot of stuff going on in the community that’s uglier than people have seen in a long time,” Tomeny said. “It’s been escalating. You don’t hear it, but it comes to her by text or email or anonymous letter, or real vile crap.”

According to Tomeny, Lucio is constantly afraid that her business, property or residence will be vandalized. When her candidacy was first announced, the Siuslaw News received several anonymous phone calls accusing Lucio of child abuse and neglect, which were found to be untrue.

“How things started to turn ugly is beyond me, but I’m almost at the point now where I’m going to tell her, ‘I’m sorry for ever have gotten you involved in this.’”

Tomeny echoes this phrasing in a letter to the editor included in today’s two Opinion pages.

This was not how the campaign was supposed to go.

When Lacer announced that she was going to retire, members of the community began looking to encourage people to run for her replacement. For Lacer, it was someone more diverse than the current remaining council.

“I did advocate and encourage younger people, both in person and in social media, and at council meetings, to consider running in hopes that our council would become a little more diverse and be more representative of our citizens,” Lacer said.

As for age, Lacer is the youngest on the council at 53, and doesn’t remember the last time someone younger was on the council.

At the same time, Tomeny, the mayor and others were looking for a replacement.

“Everybody wanted a woman,” Tomeny said. “A lot of the older people wanted an established older woman, but none of them wanted to run. Now I see why.”

Henry had known Lucio personally and liked her. So did Tomeny, who states that he leans conservative, but is generally non-partisan.

“I was getting a haircut once,” recalled Tomeny, “and I said to Geraldine, ‘Why don’t you consider running for Florence City Council?’”

But there was also another reason that Lucio had been asked: Miltenberger.

“I’ll be honest, I don’t like partisanship, and I look at Maureen as a very left-leaning person as the vice chair of the Democratic Club,” Tomeny said. “If Geraldine was the vice president of Patriot Place, I wouldn’t want her in there either.”

From all accounts, Lucio is independent in her politics, with no party affiliation. She has supported LGBTQ rights, allowing her business to host the first show of local performer Jason Wood’s drag queen character “Fanny Rugburn.”

She has also been a vocal proponent of gun rights, with Lucio being an avid hunter and fisher.

So, she was convinced to run a completely non-partisan race.

“She gets along with both sides, so I thought this was a really great thing,” Tomeny said.

A non-partisan campaign was formed. Henry helped out at the beginning of the campaign, but has since backed off, according to Tomeny.

See COMMUNITY page 10A

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