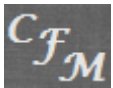


Please excuse any minor errors or typos in this edition. I tried to get it out as soon as I could, knowing that ballots have already been mailed. Any errors are my own and certainly not the fault of any participant or anyone else involved. Since Jim Van Allen was a participant in the event, he had no involvement in this edition. The candidates were great and the arrangements were very comfortable so thanks are due to the Resort and to the Hitchons.

Carefree's Future Matters VII, E13, V2

Wednesday, August 4, 2016



Friends of Carefree, in advance of the mail ballot Primary Election on August 30th, a Candidate Forum was held Wednesday evening at the Carefree Resort & Conference Center. Primary ballots were mailed on 8/3. All candidates are running unopposed so all will be elected. However, once again *we encourage you to vote for all candidates in the Primary in order to avoid the expense of a second Carefree local election in November.*

Carefree Candidate Forum, August 3, 2016 at 6:20PM

August in Arizona, along with the fact that the candidates for office are unopposed in the election probably contributed to the low turnout. Excluding the candidates, the moderator, the Hitchons, non-resident town staff and myself, there were 35 individuals in attendance; after the intermission 28 remained.

The candidates are Les Peterson for Mayor, along with Council candidates John Crane, Mike Farrar, Michael Krahe, Cheryl Kroyer, Gene Orrico, and Jim Van Allen.

Each candidate made an opening statement prior to the Q&A session. During the course of the evening it became clear that there were far more similarities among them than any potential differences. All were upbeat about Carefree and, I believe, all stated (at some point) that they are fiscal conservatives. They are a group from diverse career backgrounds with not a wall flower among them. Rather than attempt to provide you with a blow-by-blow account of the evening I'll try to provide a few highlights. The Hitchons appeared to be conducting two separate video recordings, so that avenue will be available to you should you wish to see/hear every morsel at some point.

In short order it became obvious *[to me]* why Les Peterson is unopposed in his run for the Mayoral spot. At this juncture in Carefree's existence there is simply no identifiable candidate more qualified intellectually, temperamentally, or socially be Mayor of Carefree, none. Aside from excellent communication skills, Les demonstrated a reasoned approach to various issues *[though we may not agree on all of them]* and more than a casual command of facts. IMHO, his biggest asset as Mayor has been his willingness to listen.

I can't possibly reproduce in print every word that was spoken by each candidate nor would you necessarily want to read it all. In the interest of time and space I'll just give you some thumbnail highlights of the new candidates, with no disrespect intended to any of the incumbents. The three incumbents (John Crane, Mike Farrar, and Gene Orrico) already have a solid track record. So here then is a capsule on each *new* candidate:

Michael Krahe is currently the Vice-Chairman of our P&Z Commission, a Carefree resident since 2008, and was a former Council candidate. He is a retired insurance executive who now runs a professional training organization. Two important goals he mentioned are to bring people together and to sustain the beauty of Carefree.

Cheryl Kroyer became a full-time Boulders resident in 1998 but recently moved to the Almarte development. She spent 30 years in the Advertising industry, mostly in San Francisco. She has helped develop marketing strategies and has devised communications strategies and budgets. Among the strengths she cited were Team Building and Budget management.

Jim Van Allen had been a Senior Executive in the hotel industry for 35 years, retiring in 1995. He initially bought 5 acres in Cave Creek with the intent to build there, but at the 'urging' of his wife sold that property and built a home in Carefree. He has a solid background in Accounting, Budgeting, and Management. He spent years in the Construction and Asset Management fields for his Hotel chains. He loves Carefree, has served on the Council, and feels Carefree's biggest challenge is deciding "what do we want to be."

Once the opening statements were completed Preston Westmoreland, moderator, asked the group the first question of the evening: ***Is Carefree on the right track?*** Each candidate had the opportunity to provide their answer, and each affirmed that it was, adding [*or continuing*] thoughts from their opening statements relative to what has been accomplished in Carefree and what remains to be done. It is fair to say that everyone felt Economic Development remains the biggest challenge.

The next question, just prior to intermission, asked for ***examples of 'anchor' companies that would want to come to Carefree.*** The answers were varied and interesting, but the fact is Carefree will not be able to attract a large anchor store downtown. Gene said we need to attract people year round and we need good smaller stores, where landlords should lower rents to promote business. Les mentioned that a boutique hotel is still a viable possibility. Jim mentioned that there are 240 big box stores vacant in Maricopa County. Our needs are for smaller, more affordable food establishments. John said that a great restaurant draws more restaurants.

After the break the Q&A continued. First up, ***Is a Boutique Hotel still possible?*** Les touched on this prior to the break and reiterated that it is possible and there are plans on the drawing board waiting for the right opportunity. Gene said our building height restrictions [*30 feet for commercial*] are limiting for a hotel unless it has a large footprint.

Next was, ***How can we motivate people to come to Carefree?*** Jim said that the Splashpad, Concerts, and other events draw people to town. Les added that Ray Villafane's works [*Pumpkin Festival, Sand Sculptures like the big Elephant*], and our annual Christmas Festival also draw large crowds to Carefree and provide national attention. The State now gives Carefree recognition in its Tourism materials.

Can we get the proprieties in town cleaned up? Les explained that the town [*government*] cannot spend money on private enterprises. We can only encourage property owners and businesses to make improvements that will attract return customers. By providing other

amenities the town makes it more attractive for people to visit. The merchants are encouraged to do their part.

I didn't quite hear the question about Starbucks, but it was something like *is Starbucks taking business away from our stores?* Jim said there are 4 or 5 coffee shops in Cave Creek, but no 'real' coffee shops in Carefree; the Black Mountain Coffee Shop and [in season] the Sundial Café primarily serve food. Les added that if Starbucks was not permitted to be a part of the renovation, we could have lost Bashas'. Cheryl added that Starbucks offers a great product.

A question relating to our General Plan, is *Carefree moving to higher density development?* I believe it was John and Les that both responded with, as some of our residents get a bit older they want to remain in Carefree. They have friends here, their church is here, and their volunteer organizations are here but they no longer want or need a 5,000sf home on an acre or more of land. They are asking for smaller upscale housing with less upkeep close to town center. Almarte and the now under development Eastwood project were cited as examples of developments targeting that demand [Eastwood is 2 miles east of the Town core].

There was a question about the Town sponsored concerts but I did not hear the exact phrasing of the question. Les said that our concerts typically draw 300-500 people. They cost the town \$1,000 - \$2000 each; unfortunately many of our businesses are closed. This coming season the number of concerts will be reduced to about 4, comprised of the more popular performers.

The final question was posed by Preston, following his perspective on Carefree as it was many, many years ago when lots of 'celebrity' residents lived in Carefree who wished to maintain a low profile home life. *What can be done to preserve the character of Carefree - or change it?* I believe all said or implied that while we want to preserve the things that make Carefree the place we all love, some change is inevitable and/or necessary. Here are a few sound-bites I picked up, and by no means do they represent the entire thoughtful response from anyone:

Michael, we have a unique recipe, it is a balancing act.

John, we have to stimulate economic development.

Cheryl, 99.9% of residents are here because of our uniqueness.

Les, back then Carefree was at 20% of build-out but today we are at 80% and things by necessity have changed.

Jim said "I honestly don't know".

Mike, our General Plan and the Village Master Plan developed with the Baker Group are solid guides to follow.

Gene, today the real celebrities are our residents.

The forum was concluded at approximately 8:10PM.

As I said in the piece on our website last night, my takeaways, which mirror my personal beliefs, were as follows: "local government is the only government that works" - John Crane [or should work - John Traynor]; and [regarding development] ... "this is a balancing act" - Michael Krahe.

Respectfully submitted by Jim Van Allen and John Traynor

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Carefree, what life should be!

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