



***BROWARD COUNTY PBA
DAILY CLIPS***

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MEDIA OUTLET: Sun Sentinel

HEADLINE: The dirtiest election in Broward County | Editorial

BYLINE: Sun Sentinel Editorial Board

LINK: <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/opinion/editorials/fl-editorial-hallandale-dirtiest-election-20161104-story.html>

STORY: Behind the mud-slinging campaigns for the Hallandale Beach City Commission is a donor war between two city titans — Gulfstream Park and the Diplomat Golf & Tennis Club — who hold competing stakes in Tuesday's election.

The corporate money being spent to influence the outcome of Hallandale's two commission races is unlike anything we've seen for a city of 37,000. So far, companies affiliated with the Diplomat have donated at least \$375,000 to a political action committee targeting incumbent Commissioner Michele Lazarow and her protege, Anabelle Taub.

Lazarow was on the losing side of this year's 4-1 vote to approve a \$450 million condo and hotel project at the Diplomat Golf & Tennis Club. The project includes four high-rise towers, two standing 30 stories. The neighborhood's height limit had been 10 stories.

Taub, a Realtor and political novice, is challenging 13-year incumbent Bill Julian, who was caught in August on a recording saying the Diplomat's attorney had promised him 300 campaign workers. Julian, who is under investigation by the Broward State Attorney's Office, has never denied making the comment, though the attorney denies making the promise. Diplomat executives did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Meanwhile, for differing reasons, companies with ties to Gulfstream Park have given \$75,000 to a PAC targeting Julian and Alex Lewy, a former commissioner running against Lazarow. Lewy supports Julian and says his friend "erred in his speech." He is critical of Gulfstream for not living up to a development agreement to provide affordable housing and traffic relief as part of its posh retail village. Gulfstream's CEO says the racetrack village is being strong-armed. More on that in a moment.

At its heart, the Hallandale Beach election is about changing the balance of power on a commission where Mayor Joy Cooper, Commissioner Anthony Sanders and Julian form a voting bloc. Lewy says the three encouraged him to run against Lazarow.

On the other side is Lazarow and Commissioner Keith London, who are working hand-in-hand to help Taub oust Julian and swing the 3-2 pendulum their way.

Though sharp elbows have been thrown on both sides, the Sun Sentinel Editorial Board has endorsed Taub and Lazarow in their races, believing the commission needs a reboot. Citizens want leaders who focus on solving problems and holding people accountable, not limiting discussion and forcibly removing commissioners who want to be heard, as Cooper has ordered.

--The election, so far

In trying to connect the dots in this small-town election, consider what we've learned in recent weeks:

* In September, London and Taub said they told family and friends they believed they were being followed. In a parking lot, London recorded a confrontation with a man he accused of following him. The man denied it. Channel 10 reporter Bob Norman discovered the man was, indeed, a private investigator.

* In mid-October, a grainy surveillance-like video of Lazarow and London appeared in a cable television commercial. The ad suggests they've been secretly meeting and violating the Sunshine Law. The two say they have always been good friends and respect the law's limits. But at a city meeting last summer, Lazarow expressed what London intended to do on an agenda item. Cooper reported them to the state attorney's office and an investigation is underway.

* In late October, Lazarow, London and Taub reported finding tracking devices on their cars. Critics were skeptical. But under risk of perjury, all three gave sworn statements to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, which means the matter must be taken seriously. If these devices are truly traceable, let the trail lead where it may.

* A couple weeks ago, Cooper sent us a bankruptcy file and licensed investigator's report on Taub that included her Social Security and credit card numbers. The report shows, among other things, that another person shares Taub's Social Security number and that she reportedly has used two different birth dates. Taub says she doesn't know why someone else is using her Social Security number and that her birth date was inaccurately recorded by the Broward elections office, an error since fixed.

When we asked Cooper how she obtained the reports, she denied having them or having sent them to us. "I have not seen them. And I have never sent any of that information. ... I don't recall any emails about Anabelle Taub. I don't recall sending you any information or having any information."

After we sent Cooper the emails she'd sent us, she called back a couple hours later. "I feel like a total idiot. I didn't remember sending it. I did send it. ... My bad."

Cooper says she ordered the investigative report after Taub was appointed to the city's planning and zoning board, and she didn't know who she was. After Taub attended just one meeting of the planning board, Cooper convinced her majority bloc to rescind her appointment.

* On Friday, Julian published a damning political ad in the South Florida Sun Times, which circulates in Hallandale and Aventura. The ad includes information contained in the investigative report, including Taub's date of birth and the last four digits of her Social Security number. It says the information comes from "Social Security records." Have you ever tried to get someone's Social Security number? Good luck with that. While the ad accuses Taub of identity theft, it looks more like an invitation to commit identify theft on Taub. We asked Julian about it. He said someone anonymously dropped the investigative report in his mailbox months ago. "I don't know who sent it to me. It looked very official. That's all I can say."

Add it all up, and the election for Hallandale's two commission races qualifies as Broward's dirtiest of the year.

--Big stakes for city's corporate titans

Yet the outcome of this election poses big stakes for two of the city's biggest businesses — the Diplomat and Gulfstream, which have contributed significant sums, each to opposite sides.

You might wonder why the lion's share of contributions would come from the Diplomat, given that it's already received commission approval to build a four-tower redevelopment project with 250 condos and 938 condo-hotel units. As we said, we tried to speak to two executives, but neither responded.

From what we hear, though, the high-end condo market has softened a bit and if the Diplomat wanted to delay pulling construction permits beyond its 24-month time limit, it would need approval from a friendly commission. So you can understand why it might want to keep Julian onboard and unseat Lazarow.

A short jog down Hallandale Beach Boulevard, the story is much different at Gulfstream Park, where CEO Tim Ritvo says he only seeks a level playing field. Gulfstream officials generally contribute \$3,000 to commission candidates, no matter who's running against whom. It's unusual for track officials to contribute \$75,000 to a political action committee focused on city politics. Ritvo said he gave to the committee — called Ethics Matter — after being told about corruption in the city.

"We have a long-standing relationship with Bill Julian, Ritvo said. "His father was a trainer. Bill was supportive of the races. .. But nobody could like what was said on that tape. Everybody had to have a problem with that."

It's no secret the Diplomat also hopes to offer casino gambling one day, which would pose a huge competitive threat to Gulfstream. Within the last year, the owner of nearby Mardi Gras has expressed interest in moving his casino permit, but multiple sources say he's eyeing the BB&T Center. Ritvo says Gulfstream supports the possible move out west.

But as it turns out, casino gambling is not the big corporate issue behind the race for these two commission seats, which each pay \$21,000 a year, plus benefits.

Rather, the issue is a road the city hopes to build through Gulfstream's property to ease traffic on Hallandale Beach Boulevard — a terribly congested road sure to worsen once the Diplomat project is built.

Ritvo says Gulfstream's tension with Cooper has been building for months, but surfaced after the horse park announced plans to build a high-end movie theater on the property's south side. Before issuing the permit, he said the city wanted the park to surrender a five-foot corridor along its north side. "That doesn't sound fair. We're applying for a permit for the south side to build a movie theater, and they want property on the other side. Then, we had an issue getting permits at all."

Most recently, Ritvo said the city wants "to take a big chunk of our property" to extend Hibiscus Road through to at least 14th Ave." The land now houses the track's barns and depending on the route, its jockey dorms, too. When the track didn't immediately respond, the city began exploring taking the land by eminent domain.

"When we started to feel threatened, we started to investigate what's going on. Why do they need this road? We're hearing about the Diplomat development project," said Ritvo, who stressed that he welcomes development in the area because it would bring more customers to Gulfstream.

"What we are opposed to is a developer being allowed to build because they got access to a road (built on) property from us," Ritvo said.

"If there's a traffic situation the city needs help to alleviate, let's sit down and talk," he added. "But if they want to use our property to develop more, that's not a good case for us to give up property."

Cooper says Gulfstream is contributing big-time to this election because "they want to secure three votes so that road doesn't get built. That's what this is about."

"We're not taking their land to build any new development. We need this road to reduce traffic on Hallandale Beach Boulevard," she said. "They are not negotiating in good faith. We need to get the roadway done. They should be supportive of this and not be against it."

The city has further flexed its muscle by refusing to pay Gulfstream about \$500,000 from its Community Redevelopment Agency this year, a commitment the village secured during the recession because it represented a win-win for the park and the community. Cooper says there's a chance the city will attempt to clawback millions paid Gulfstream in recent years, too. She says the village has failed to live up to its agreement to provide affordable housing and traffic relief.

Replies Ritvo: "There are some things we may have not totally completed during the build-out. We haven't gotten to them yet. It's over a billion dollars in investment. These things don't happen overnight."

Gulfstream has tried to work with the mayor, he said, but "it's gone from bad to worse. She wasn't willing to negotiate anymore. The threats started to come. ... We can't negotiate with a gun to our head."

Big-name lawyers are now involved and legal fees are adding up. If the city pursues eminent domain, we're told the law says it will have to pay Gulfstream's legal and expert witness fees, too.

"If the city wants to take that land from them, Gulfstream could potentially have damages that could exceed \$60 million because you have the value of the barns, the cost to rebuild them, the cost of the land they would have to put them on, the jockey housing, then the disruption to their business," says communications consultant Evan Ross, who's had conversations with Gulfstream officials and is a friend of Lazarow and Lazarow.

"Gulfstream is willing to work with the city to sell, they just don't want to be strong-armed into giving it away or pressured into getting a deal done in an unreasonable amount of time," he said.

If Lazarow and Taub win the election, Ross said he believes a deal on the road could be completed within 12 months.

After more deeply exploring the issues in this race, we're more convinced than ever that the city commission needs a reboot.

In the end, there's really only one thing most every Hallandale politician we talked to agrees on. That is, the desire to end the influence of corporate money in politics.

"These big corporations, if they don't get their own way, or feel slighted, or have their egos put in check, they have the money to spend on campaigns," Cooper said. "This is crazy for a city of our size. It really reeks."

We've got to believe corporations don't want to spend money on political campaigns, but that's how the system works. And the U.S. Supreme Court says corporations are citizens, too.

"We're trying to be transparent," Ritvo says. "We're trying to tell you what we think. We need the city to function without corruption, to function properly because we're the biggest taxpayer in it, the biggest landholder, the biggest employer. We want it to be a functioning, non-corrupt city."

On that, we can all agree.

MEDIA OUTLET: Sun Sentinel

HEADLINE: Whiff of powerful drug fentanyl sickens three Broward Sheriff's Office K-9s, officials say

BYLINE: Rebeca Piccardo

LINK: <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/fl-bso-canines-fentanyl-overdose-20161104-story.html>

STORY: Moments after searching for drugs inside a house in Lauderhill, Broward Sheriff's Office K-9 handler Dustin Thompson noticed there was something wrong with one of his dogs.

Primus, a German shorthaired pointer, laid down in the car and stopped moving. He had a blank stare and didn't react to anything around him.

"He was in kind of a sedated state. He had a lack of energy," said Detective Andy Weiman, who trained Primus and was assisting his handler that day. "Primus is a pretty high-energy dog. He's very excitable. He would usually be standing or trying to jump out of the car."

Primus and two other K-9s who had been searching for hidden cash inside the same house were rushed to Coral Springs Animal Hospital on Oct. 27 after they showed signs of drug exposure and possible overdose, the sheriff's office said.

While the dogs were on the way to the clinic, other law enforcement agents continued searching the house and found a bag of drugs that authorities said tested positive for fentanyl, a dangerous synthetic opiate that is up to 50 times more potent than heroin, and up to 100 times stronger than morphine.

Fentanyl — and its even more potent derivative, carfentanil — pose a particular danger to paramedics and law enforcement, who run the risk of inhaling the drug simply by coming in contact with it while on duty. Even a very small amount can be lethal.

That morning, members of the sheriff's office Detection Canine Unit were assisting Lauderhill police, Drug Enforcement Agency and Homeland Security Investigations agents with an investigation into the sale of heroin and heroin laced with fentanyl, the sheriff's office said.

Primus and two other K-9s, a German shorthaired pointer named Finn and a yellow Labrador retriever named Packer, were tasked with searching a house for drugs and money. Merely getting a whiff of the drug was enough to sicken the dogs, the sheriff's office said.

"It was believed that the supplier of the fentanyl had been arrested some weeks prior to the execution of the warrant and the presence of fentanyl was unlikely," the sheriff's office said in an email. "Prior to the search, the handlers conducted a walkthrough and did not observe any obvious hazards to the handlers or canines."

At the animal hospital, Primus was given fluids and a dose of naloxone, an antidote used to revive drug users from opiate overdoses. It is often known by its brand name, Narcan. Finn and Packer were given IV fluids to help them "metabolize the drugs," Weiman said.

All three dogs recovered quickly and were back on duty the next day, he said.

Weiman said he is even more wary of the hazards that handlers and K-9s can encounter with a drug such as fentanyl out on the streets.

"It seems as though it can be a danger to everybody," Weiman said. "It's a whole other level of precautions that you have to take [with this drug] so you don't become one of the victims."