

Voter Beware

Written by

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The slate of candidates for Davenport's 2008-9 city council has been decided.

Davenport residents were fairly deceived, during the last campaign, by several of the elected officials currently serving, so this time it is "voter beware."

It is important to know the professional backgrounds of those running, as well as the inspiration, incentive, or both, to vie for a council seat.

The mayoral race is of particular interest. The primary unseated Alderman-at-Large Jamie Howard, leaving Phil Yerington and Bill Gluba, neither a city officeholder, as contenders. Howard's stab at the mayoral office rather than re-running for alderman-at-large is peculiar in that she did not enjoy the support of her handlers (DavenportOne and friends), nor did she merit voter support as evidenced in the primary. So why did she run? Perhaps for the same reason that Steve Ahrens might have run in the last election under nearly identical circumstances - the potential for something more permanent, not to mention lucrative, in the future, relative to positions paid for by taxpayers? It wasn't long after Ahrens' failed candidacy for mayor that he secured a \$70,000-plus position as director of the Levee Improvement Commission. It's time to pay attention.

Bill Gluba has startling similarities to current Mayor Ed Winborn, with a nearly identical platform. Both Gluba and Winborn have long careers in politics, including the Scott County

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board of supervisors. Gluba, however, was also elected to the Iowa state legislature, but that was many years ago.

My guess is that Gluba was recruited out of political retirement, as was Winborn, and that his candidacy is part of some political strategy that hinges on name recognition and electability. Winborn virtually destroyed his political reputation, after decades of substantive service, by acting almost solely for the benefit of DavenportOne and special interests. His voting record underscores his allegiances, leaving his legacy as one of the poorest Davenport mayors ever.

While I cannot fathom the reasons for this deliberate degradation of one's own career, it has left voters extremely distrustful of career politicians who suddenly re-emerge. Winborn campaigned on unifying the council after the fiasco that characterized Mayor Charlie Brooke's two terms. Gluba is claiming to do the same, pretty much, as are a lot of the other candidates running.

For my part, I couldn't be less concerned about how well the council gets along, as long as each is doing the job he/she was elected to do. The reason there is no unity amongst current council members is because it is divided right down the middle over the concerns of residents and taxpayers versus concerns of special interests. Period.

Aldermen Brooke, Howard, Frink, Dumas, and many times Barnhill, who consistently did the bidding of DavenportOne and friends at the expense of taxpayers, versus Aldermen Meyer, Hamerlinck, Lynn, Ambrose, and Van Fossen, who consistently represented the taxpayers and residents in most issues. Mayor Winborn voted in league with Brooke and his bunch, unfailingly breaking any ties in their favor.

As far as restoring respect to council proceedings, eliminate the disrespect shown Third Ward Alderman Keith Meyer by some of his peers, including City Administrator Craig Malin, as well as answer this alderman's consistently relevant questions, and that would clean up 90 percent of that problem.

The amount of grief aimed at Alderman Meyer, including the defiant lack of response to his hundreds of legitimate questions, can only mean that there are things occurring covertly, with

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deliberate efforts to keep information out of the public arena. There is no other excuse for the professionally abusive conduct towards Alderman Meyer.

Meanwhile, mayoral candidate Phil Yerington's previous legacy as mayor was one of restoring transparency to government. He is credited with opening City Hall's doors and bringing a more vibrant civic participation to Davenport after a long reign of civic manipulation and betrayal, including that of ex-Mayor Pat Gibbs. Can Yerington repeat this success as mayor?

Davenport has a long history of churning politicians. We keep reelecting the same old same old. Career politicians like Gibbs, who runs for any seat available, keep coming back to the civic trough, even after resounding defeats, and actually win. Such is the case with Barney Barnhill. His support of a golf course amid a multi-use development at 53rd Street and Eastern Avenue several terms back got him bounced, as it did Gibbs. Yet voters reelected each of them, forgetting their respective betrayals of the public trust, to renewed terms, Barnhill as Fourth Ward alderman, and Gibbs as a county supervisor for a term. There are numerous examples of this nonsense.

Yerington, on the other hand, elected not to run for another term, leaving politics altogether in a state of civic grace, if you will. Now he is returning, and could potentially be precisely what the community needs. Commendably, he states plainly what he stands for, and what he will specifically do if elected, meaning he is comfortable with his positions and willing to go on the record.

What we don't need, however, is another colossal disappointment in the form of a candidate who enjoys reelection based on a previously established, well-deserved trust, but who betrays the voters for whatever justifications.

Politicians cannot be all things to all people. What most of them quickly learn is that once they leave the political arena, they are off the Christmas-card lists of those that cleaved to them while in office. More importantly, it becomes evident that no amount of pandering or favoring can buy respect. In fact, it is just the opposite. Special interests know who can and can't be controlled, and at the end of the day, it is those civically principled elected officials who hold their esteem.

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What voters need to do is get a handle of who is running; why; what are the specific agendas; what are the priorities; who are the primary campaign donors; what is the professional background; where are the allegiances; and what are the leadership skills? Also worth noting is whether the candidate supports an annual taxpayer contribution of \$100,000 to DavenportOne's D1 Initiative, which funds the lobbying efforts of DavenportOne locally, statewide, and nationally. Listen closely to the candidates' answers to this yes or no question, and taxpayers will have a good understanding of whose interests that candidate will support once in office.