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Longtime residents on ballot for Cutler Bay council

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On June 28 Cutler Bay council member Sue Ellen Loyzelle will face off against William "Chuck" Barrentine for a seat on the Town Council.

With the quality of education, development and taxes on the minds of voters, both candidates have said they are in favor of the charter high school the town hopes to open and "smart development." And both have pledged not to raise property taxes.

The differences between the two boil down to their backgrounds.

Sue Ellen Loyzelle

Loyzelle, 50, has lived in the Cutler Bay area for about 18 years. She is currently the director of grants for the YMCA of Greater Miami, a position she has held for the past 15 years.

She also served in the Homestead/South Dade Kiwanis Club as past president and a member for 19 years. Loyzelle has also been involved with a number of community service organizations, including the United Way and Leadership Miami, a mentorship program through the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce. This spring she helped secure \$60,000 in scholarships for South Florida college students.

Loyzelle hopes this experience is what will set her apart.

"My community service speaks for itself," Loyzelle said. "I'm not one to go home after work and sit on the couch."

Loyzelle was appointed to the Town Council in November when Edward MacDougall was elected mayor of Cutler Bay and Ernie Sochin was appointed vice mayor, vacating the District 2 seat. All town voters can cast ballots in the election.

During her time in office Loyzelle sponsored a resolution to appoint advisory committee members to the Parks and Recreations Advisory Committee and a recent resolution to secure funding for buses that would transport senior citizens to the new South Dade Cultural Arts Center.

"This will help them get out and enjoy what the town has to offer," she said.

Of the \$9,196 Loyzelle has raised for her campaign, the majority came from donors outside of Cutler Bay, including a Coral Gables based company, Summerville Charter School Developers, which is currently under consideration to manage the charter school the town hopes to open in fall of 2012.

Loyzelle said she is proud of all her campaign contributions, and they would have no influence on her vote.

"Nobody influences me," she said. "I'm an independant thinker."

If elected Loyzelle hopes to reach out to new residents to inform them of town rules and to continue to fund parks and recreational programming for people of all ages.

In response to criticism qat a candidate forum that she has been unresponsive to e-mails she said she has done her best to reach out to residents.

"We are inundated with e-mails," she said. "I don't feel I am unresponsive. I've been to the homes of some of the people who have e-mailed me. Sometimes I might call the person instead of replying to an e-mail."

In her spare time Loyzelle trains her dogs, a Border Collie and an Australian Shepard, in frisbee and agility. She also enjoys chatting with the neighbors on her cul-de-sac.

"I just love the friendliness of Cutler Bay," she said. "Everyone talks to everyone, and everyone knows your name. I can't imagine living anywhere else."

William "Chuck" Barrentine

Barrentine, 49, manages commercial warehouses, and has a background in retail asset protection for companies like Home Depot and Burdines. Along with his wife and son, Barrentine has lived in the Cutler Bay area for about 20 years.

Barrentine holds five certifications from FEMA and served as the citizen advisor for emergency preparedness under former Mayor John F. Cosgrove. He also put together a hurricane preparedness manual for residents of Cutler Bay and distributed Red Cross and FEMA literature.

Barrentine points to his understanding of emergency preparedness, accurate research and managing a budget as valuable experience he can bring to the town council.

"I see a lot of aspects of running a town that are similar to my background in business," he said.

Barrentine first ran for the District 2 seat in 2006, but lost before the runoff election, though he said he learned a lot from the experience and met many long-time Cutler Bay residents.

If elected, Barrentine hopes to prevent what he considers undesirable development in Cutler Bay, like four-story buildings along Old Cutler Road. He also wants to increase government transparency.

Currently, on the town's website, residents can view an itemized list of checks the town has written. Barrentine would like the list to include exactly what each check was for, not just who it was made out to.

He has also criticized Loyzelle and other members of the Town Council for not responding promptly to e-mails from residents. Barrentine said it's a symptom of an over-arching problem

of poor communication between the government and people of Cutler Bay.

“When we incorporated they promised a smaller, tight-knit government,” he said. “Right now we have the same problems as Miami-Dade. I can’t fathom why someone would be on the council and wouldn’t respond to e-mails.”

Barrentine is an active member of the Booster Club at Columbus High School, where his son plays football. He said, even if elected, he’ll try to spend as much time as possible with his family before his son graduates next year and leaves for college.

Like Loyzelle, Barrentine said it’s the small-town feel in Cutler Bay that makes it a special place to live, and worth getting involved in local government.

“You know your neighbors here, you run into them at Publix and at the ball field,” he said. “That’s something we’ve got to hold onto as best we can. People move here for that reason.”

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