

Special Message concerning upcoming Delray election

Special Bulletin February 26, 2013

Last week our City Commission voted to spend \$10,000 of taxpayer money to hire a public relations firm to promote several ballot initiatives that will appear on the ballot on the March 12th election. Approving the expenditure were Mayor Carney, Commissioner Jacquet and Commissioner Morrison.

A couple of months ago the Commission placed 6 items on the March ballot for the approval of voters. They have to do with items that the Commission would like to change in our City Charter. The Intelligence Report will have a full analysis of the items the week before the election, but we will give you an advance peek at a few of them: (a) changing the elected terms of Commissioners from 2 years to 3 years, (b) allowing the Mayor to serve an additional 6 years after serving as a Commissioner, and (c) changing the method of voting at Commission meetings.

The City has a full-time publicity department and regularly sends out information to residents. Why, then, spend this money? You will recall that voters defeated another ballot initiative proposed by the Commission last year. (extending Commission terms) A City cannot advocate for or against a ballot initiative. However, a private, outside firm has more flexibility. It is able to craft a PR effort to encourage you to vote as they would like, or as they might say, "an opportunity to educate the voters".

The firm chosen, Connection Strategies in West Palm Beach (not a Delray firm), states that it "specializes in ballot issue campaigns" and it boasts, "We deliver proven results for public entities". If the firm is hired only to inform the public, it is interesting that it talks of "campaigns" and "proven results". Sounds to us as if they are looking for a specific outcome, but maybe we are just not trusting enough.

Probably about a week before the election you will receive a mailer designed by Connection Strategies regarding the ballot measures. For the \$10,000 price, we hope it is colorful and glossy. About the same time, at no expense to the taxpayers, we will send our analysis for your consideration. You will recognize ours because it will not be glossy.

Thanks for your interest in Friends of Delray.
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