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### ***A character issue joins city clerk race***

Niki Kelly and Benjamin Lanka | The Journal Gazette

The race for Fort Wayne city clerk has been full of contention and intrigue, thanks in large part to some political missteps by the Republican challenger.

Allen County Republican Chairman Steve Shine issued a statement last week asking voters to concentrate more on the issues of the office instead of what he described as petty personality conflicts.

In the statement, Shine said he doesn't always agree with things Republican candidates say and that he does not condone things GOP clerk candidate Zach Bonahoom has written online.

"I also do not condone using these comments to paint an eager and well-meaning young man as something he is not," Shine said. "The online world is rife with flippant, overheated remarks that mean nothing about the character of the people who wrote them."

Bonahoom, 22, drew fire for posting comments on Twitter attacking Fort Wayne Community Schools Board President Mark GiaQuinta and referring to parking control officers as "parking Nazis." The clerk is responsible for overseeing parking control.

In addition, Bonahoom had a run-in with police last weekend regarding political signs in his vehicle. Shine referred to this as "politically driven accusations" and called it a "meaningless distraction."

Marsha Simmons, president of Bonahoom's condominium association, said the issue was more about Bonahoom refusing to follow condominium covenants that prohibit any signs. She said she has never spoken directly with the candidate and thought the issue was resolved after speaking to the association attorney.

She then found a page of Indiana Code regarding political signs taped to her door with "DON'T MESS WITH ME" written on the top.

While Shine would like the focus of the race to be on issues regarding the clerk's office, two Republicans have told Political Notebook they understand the Republican clerk candidate is causing these distractions.

The Republicans, both of whom strongly support Bonahoom's candidacy, said they have told Bonahoom to watch what he says and does publicly to ensure the focus of the race stays on point.

Democratic Clerk Sandy Kennedy has been relatively quiet about these issues, allowing the local Democratic Party to attack her opponent.

#### Reform recollections

At least one former employee doesn't have positive memories of Gov. Mitch Daniels' efforts to reform state government.

Tad DeHaven testified before a congressional subcommittee Oct. 5 about the two years he spent on Daniels' Government Efficiency and Financial Planning group. He left in 2008 and now is an analyst for the Cato Institute – a Washington, D.C., think tank.

He said recommendations from two efficiency reports were essentially panned by Daniels' advisers to avoid political fights.

"I learned from my Indiana government experience – under a governor thought to be a fiscal hawk – that political leaders are good at generating sound bites designed to make taxpayers believe that their interests come first," DeHaven said.

"In reality, taxpayer interests usually end up taking a back seat to the interests of select individuals or groups. I also learned that a failure to back up the sound bites with follow-through action only serves to embolden the special interests."

Some things the state efficiency reports suggested have been accomplished since DeHaven left state government, such as reducing the length of a de-ghosting period in the school funding formula and tightening the state's seat-belt law for Hoosiers driving trucks.

Others have not been implemented, such as adding age as a protected class under the Indiana Civil Rights Act and overhauling the Victims Compensation program.

DeHaven said his comments seemed personal against the governor, but they were meant only to show politics is always involved in government spending.

"The point of the Indiana stuff was that, even with a guy with a national reputation as a penny-pinching, above-the-fray policy wonk, decisions made in his office were based on politics," he said. "It was not meant to be controversial. I was just saying 'this is how it works.'"

Clearly, Daniels took it personally based on the following response from deputy chief of staff Cris Johnston:

“The governor wasn’t just supportive in efficiency efforts, he led the charge. Tad’s only involvement as a junior staff member was to write two reports based on the work completed by others. Unable to accept that change in a large organization doesn’t just happen because it sounds good or comes from an authoritative group, Tad departed state government about a year after the second report.

“As a result he did not participate in the implementation of the recommendations, of which more than half have been fully or partially implemented. Tad is a great blogger pointing out problems, but he possessed neither the skills nor willingness to be part of the solution.”

DeHaven’s performance evaluations while in state government show he met, and sometimes exceeded, expectations but also note his frustration with the lack of progress on the efficiency recommendations.

Forcing fresh blood

Allen County Sheriff Ken Fries thinks there needs to be a change in the Fort Wayne clerk’s office.

While it was not surprising to see the Republican onstage supporting fellow Republican Zach Bonahoom’s efforts to unseat Democrat Sandy Kennedy, Fries made it clear change is good for all offices.

In criticizing Kennedy, who has served seven terms as clerk, Fries said he is limited to two terms, and the clerk’s office should have term limits as well.

“I think every office ought to be term limited,” Fries said, noting this brings new people into elected offices.

While the statement was directed at a Democrat, it must be noted several of Fries’ fellow Republicans would be hurt by this rule. For example, City Councilman Tom Smith, R-1st, attended the meeting and is seeking his fourth, four-year term on the council.

Fiery endorsements

People driving around Fort Wayne might have noticed the local firefighter union has made its picks for this fall. The Fort Wayne firefighter union’s political action committee has filled city bus huts with large signs announcing its choices for the fall election, although the group did not pick a candidate in every race.

Jeremy Bush, union president and PAC chair, said the group interviewed city candidates and then voted to determine whom to support. The votes were based on how the officials would deal with fire-related issues, such as insurance and collective bargaining, but also how they would run the city as a whole, Bush said.

The choices were: Democrat Karen Goldner in the 2nd District, Republican Tom Didier in the 3rd District, Democrat Geoff Paddock in the 5th District and Democrats John Shoaff and Gordon Anthony along with Republican Marty Bender for the at-large positions.

Bush said the group didn't make choices for mayor, 1st District council or 4th District council. This was either because the union was split between the candidates or decided not to choose either. The union did endorse Councilman Glynn Hines, D-6th, as well, but he is not opposed this fall.