



Posted on Sun, Sep. 02, 2012

## Field of seven vie for spots on Dania Beach commission

By Kelly Malambri  
The Miami Herald



Walter Duke

With three spots up for grabs on the Dania Beach City Commission, residents are hearing lots of promises:

We'll continue the fight against airport expansion.

We'll reduce your property taxes.

We'll help the city grow into a seaside tourist gem.

The seven candidates include two incumbents, several activists and a former citizen of the year. They are: Chickie Brandimart, Walter Duke, Bruce Hannover, Bill Harris, Albert C. Jones, C.K. McElyea and Rae L. Sandler.

Incumbents Duke and McElyea are running for re-election; the third spot on the dais currently belongs to Commissioner Anne Castro, who is prohibited from running due to term limits.

Brandimarte, 75, has been president of the Seniors Club for the last 11 years, captain of two "citizen on patrol" units and was named the Broward County Citizen of the Year in 2001. She also received a TRIADS citizen award in 2011 from the national Sheriff's Association, in recognition of her work with law enforcement protecting seniors. Brandimarte served on the Dania Beach Housing Board, and along with being on the board of directors in the mid-2000s for Meadowbrook condos, she founded the Dania Beach Men's and Women's Club. Now, she works as a nurse.

Brandimarte said she is concerned about the flooding that occurs in some parts of the city.

"I am especially concerned about the airport expansion's impact to our neighbors all over Dania Beach," she said via email.

Duke has served on the Dania Beach City Commission since 2009. He has also served on Dania Beach's Community Redevelopment Agency.

Creating jobs in Dania Beach and continuing with the redevelopment of the city are his biggest goals, Duke said.

Duke, 52, currently serves as president of Clobus, McLemore & Duke, Inc., a commercial real estate appraisal firm, and has previously served as president of the South Florida Chapter of the Appraisal Institute.

"My goal is to make Dania Beach become the best city of its size in America and that's what I have been working on," he said. He has been a resident of the city for five years.

Hannover, 58, has been a resident of Dania Beach for 23 years. "Responsible" re-development is what he pinpoints as the biggest issue to him. He has been involved with fundraising, the Boy Scouts of America, helping organize events at St. David's Catholic Church and has worked in communications. Now Hannover is responsible for the sound reinforcement division of Dunne Music, working to set up sound systems in houses of worship.

He says it's time for some "new blood" on the commission.

"There's a lot of people who have been involved for many, many, many years and perhaps it's time for them to yield to people who have been observing for many years," Hannover said.

He also said his focus would be on protecting neighborhoods from crime and keeping them clean as well as maintaining or increasing the city's tax base.

Harris, a resident of Dania Beach for 10 years, was appointed to the Dania Beach Planning and Zoning Board in 2011 and is the vice president of the Nature's Cove Homeowner's Association. He is also an active member of the Dania Beach Chamber of Commerce, according to his website.

Harris said he will work to avoid property tax increases for homeowners, and help protect the interests of those who live close to the airport expansion.

"I would like to see Dania Beach be a thriving sea-side gem of a city with small businesses, boutique hotels, and attract overnight cruise passengers and just kind of recover from the economic downturn and just be vibrant again," he said.

The biggest issue in this election will be the airport expansion at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International airport, he said.

One of his hopes is to help create a senior center and possibly provide transportation via a trolley. He also hopes to increase CRA membership and activity.

Harris, 57, has worked in hospitality, including at the Marriott, Hilton and Hyatt hotels.

Jones was a Dania Beach commissioner in 2009 when then-Gov. Charlie Christ appointed him to the Broward County Commission after Josephus Eggelton was arrested on corruption charges. Jones, 66, served the county from 2009 to 2010, after which he lost the election for District 9 and came back to Dania Beach. Jones is also on the Memorial Healthcare System Board as a commissioner.

He said in an email that his main focuses will be on the airport expansion, the revitalization of the beach and marina, the redevelopment of the commercial corridors throughout the city and increasing the city's reserve funds.

"My number one goal for Dania Beach would be to continue talking and working with county officials in resolving the funding gap of the airport expansion," he said via email.

Jones has been a lifelong resident of Dania Beach — his parents, who still reside in the city, were pioneers here, he said.

McElyea is the current vice mayor and former mayor of Dania Beach. He's also been on the zoning board for the city.

"I'd like to finish up the marina and get it first-class, that's one of the main projects," said McElyea, 80.

Another goal is keeping the water plant up to date; taxes will also be a big issue in the election.

"I have always voted to keep them where they are at or lower," McElyea said.

Rae Sandler, 60, is the current president of the Melaleuca Gardens Homeowners Association, and for the last seven years has taken the lead in the airport expansion issue. With Castro being forced out, neighbors urged Sandler to run, she said.

"I'm up for the challenge," said Sandler, who lives just south of where the new runway is being built. "The whole city is going to be impacted by that airport."

Sandler, who has lived in Dania Beach for 34 years, said while redevelopment is important, she doesn't wish to see high rises in the city. But she's flexible, she added.

"Whatever people want," she said.

Rae has been an administrative assistant for 14 years.

The top vote getter will serve as mayor for two years; the second-highest vote getter will serve as vice mayor for one year and then become a commissioner; the third highest vote getter will be a commissioner.

The election is Nov. 6

---

© 2012 Miami Herald Media Company. All Rights Reserved.  
<http://www.miamiherald.com>