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Group eyes August for Naples ethics referendum

Joseph Cranney

Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

A Naples political action committee is now eyeing the August ballot for a referendum to poll voters on the creation of a local ethics commission to govern conduct of public officials.

But the newly formed Naples Ethics PAC is still collecting signatures on its petition to establish a volunteer ethics board and an Office of Ethics and Government Integrity.

The commission, which would be the first in Naples history, would have the power to investigate complaints against local officials and oversee sweeping changes to Naples ethics ordinances.

The PAC has collected 360 signatures since its effort began Nov. 1, said John Lehmann, the PAC's vice president.

To qualify its petition for a ballot question, the group must collect signatures from at least 10 percent of the city's registered voters. For the 2016 election, there were roughly 14,500 registered voters, so about 1,450 signatures would be needed.

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Patton named best in Florida

Foundation honors Collier schools' leader

Annika Hammerschlag
Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

TAMPA – Kamela Patton of Collier County schools has been named the 2017 superintendent of the year by a Florida education group.

The Consortium of Florida Education Foundation evaluated nominees based on their involvement with their local education foundation.

Patton was recognized at a Thursday ceremony in Tampa for her dedication to Future Ready Collier, an association of more than 50 organizations that help prepare children for kindergarten, and high school students for college and careers.

The team effort is credited for increasing Free Application for Federal Student Aid completion rates, which are up 5 percent among Collier students compared to this time last year.

Throughout her seven-year tenure, Patton's administration — in partnership with Future Ready Collier — has hosted numerous financial aid nights to help students and families navigate the complex FAFSA application process.

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Kamela Patton accepts the award for superintendent of the year at the joint conference of the Florida School Boards Association and the Florida Association of District School Superintendents in Tampa on Thursday.

LIAM JAMES DOYLE/
NAPLES DAILY NEWS

Trump weighs plan to fire Tillerson, put CIA's boss at State

Jill Colvin
and Josh Lederman
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON – After months of clashes on policy and personality, President Donald Trump is considering ousting Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and replacing him with



Pompeo

hard-nosed CIA Director Mike Pompeo after less than a year on the job, senior U.S. officials said Thursday as turmoil within Trump's national security team became clearer.

The White House plan, which Trump has not approved, would force a major realignment early in his term. It also would create a vacancy atop the CIA that officials said could be filled by Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark. The overhaul could produce a significant shift in both the

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Study gives dogs edge

Are dogs smarter than cats? Yes, and science proves it. 12A

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RANDALL MITCHELL CUSTOM HOMES

Texas sheriff doubts border agents were attacked

Tractor-trailer accident possible along stretch of I-10 near Mexico, he said

ASSOCIATED PRESS

VAN HORN, Texas — A Texas sheriff who was among the first people to reach two severely injured U.S. Border Patrol agents said he thinks they might have been in a traffic accident, not attacked, as President Donald Trump and some others have suggested.

The injured agents were found the night of Nov. 18 along a culvert next to Interstate 10 near Van Horn, which is about 110 miles southeast of El Paso and about 30 miles from the border with Mexico.

Agent Rogelio Martinez succumbed

to traumatic head injuries and broken bones. His partner, who has not been identified, was seriously injured and hospitalized for several days. The agent has no memory of what happened that night.

Culberson County Sheriff Oscar Carrillo said he thinks a tractor-trailer might have accidentally sideswiped the pair, The Dallas Morning News reported.

I-10 is a heavily traveled route for truck drivers, and accidents regularly occur, some due to wind drafts and others from drivers overcorrecting after drifting across lanes, Carrillo said.

“From the beginning, we were radioed to assist in the incident as an injury, not an assault,” Carrillo told the newspaper. “That’s the way it was communicated to us.”

“If this was an assault, believe me, as sheriff, I’d be the first one out there emphasizing safety in our community and with our deputies, pairing them up,” he added.

It’s not clear why Martinez and his partner were along the highway, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection said in a statement only that they “were responding to activity.”

A Border Patrol union, the National Border Patrol Council, has said the pair were attacked and struck with a rock or rocks.

President Donald Trump, Sen. Ted Cruz and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott also have said the two were attacked. Trump used the incident to renew his call for a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico.

Emmerson Buie Jr., special agent in

“From the beginning, we were radioed to assist in the incident as an injury, not an assault. That’s the way it was communicated to us.”

Oscar Carrillo
Culberson County

charge, in the FBI’s El Paso office, said last week that investigators were treating the incident as a “potential assault” but could not rule out other scenarios.

Federal officials have released few details about the circumstances leading to the pair’s injuries.

Tillerson

Continued from Page 1A

tone and direction of the president’s foreign policy, removing it from the understated former oilman whose style hasn’t fit well with Trump’s.

It is exceedingly rare for a secretary of state, America’s face on the global stage, to be fired or to serve for a year or less. Nor is it common for presidents to have such a significant Cabinet revamp so soon after taking office. Too much churn could fuel the perception of chaos in the Trump White House — perhaps one reason he has yet to replace Tillerson.

Tillerson’s likely ouster, first reported by The New York Times, loomed awkwardly over an Oval Office meeting Thursday between Trump and the visiting Bahraini crown prince. Asked by a reporter whether he wanted Tillerson to stay on the job, Trump was coy, merely pointing out that Tillerson was in the building.

“He’s here. Rex is here,” the president said.

Timing for any move was uncertain.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Tillerson’s closest ally in the administration,



Secretary of State Rex Tillerson talks Thursday at the State Department in Washington. The White House is discussing a plan to replace Rex Tillerson with CIA Director Mike Pompeo, according to an official in the Trump administration. CLIFF OWEN/AP

simply brushed off the report. “There’s nothing to it,” he said when asked.

However, White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders didn’t deny it. She did suggest that no move was imminent, saying the president and Tillerson

planned to “work together to close out what we’ve seen to be an incredible year.”

Friction between the president and the nation’s top diplomat has grown increasingly public through the year.

After a report last month that Tillerson had called the president a “moron,” Tillerson was forced to appear before cameras at the State Department to pledge fealty to his boss. Soon afterward, Trump publicly challenged his secretary to an IQ match.

For Tillerson, who left his job as Exxon Mobil’s CEO, a premature departure from the Cabinet has seemed increasingly inevitable.

When Tillerson was tapped for the job late last year, many Trump critics expressed quiet relief that the president had picked a sober “adult” who could form a counterweight to Trump’s brasher, impulsive approach, especially on matters of war and peace.

Yet divisions on key foreign policy issues emerged quickly, and Trump repeatedly has undermined Tillerson by voicing positions at odds with those the State Department was pushing.

Pompeo, in contrast, has formed a tight relationship with Trump, leading to a role much broader than many past CIA chiefs had. A former businessman

and conservative Republican congressman from Kansas, Pompeo is at the White House almost every day to deliver the daily intelligence briefing, a task often delegated to less senior officials.

Cotton, a top contender to take over at the CIA, has been one of Trump’s staunchest defenders on foreign policy in Congress.

Yet moving him would create a Senate vacancy just as Republicans need every vote possible. Under Arkansas law, if Cotton steps down before next July, the state’s Republican governor would appoint a replacement who would serve until the November 2018 election. If Cotton stays in the Senate, his term won’t end until 2020.

Cotton’s office wouldn’t comment other than to say: “Senator Cotton’s focus is on serving Arkansans in the Senate.”

Several administration officials said Pompeo has said he is open to the job.

Tillerson’s top priority as secretary has been his sweeping overhaul of the State Department, a “redesign” that has been lambasted by lawmakers from both parties and that the State Department concedes has hurt morale among diplomats. Still, Tillerson aides say he expects to remain in his role to see the overhaul through.

Naples ethics

Continued from Page 1A

The PAC must collect those signatures by May 15 to get a referendum on the August primary ballot, Lehmann said.

“I have no doubt we’ll meet the deadline,” he said.

The PAC initially aimed to have the ballot question as part of February’s municipal election, but Lehmann said his group didn’t have enough time to collect signatures.

In the meantime, the PAC has pitched its proposal to local officials.

“We would love to get on the February ballot, but we’ve got a much better document now, because we’ve gotten a lot of input,” Lehmann said.

According to the PAC’s proposal, the five members of the ethics board would be appointed by the Naples City Council, the Naples representative on the Collier County Commission, the sheriff, the public defender’s office and the state attorney’s office.

Individuals from each of those groups already have agreed to the arrangement, Lehmann said.

Idea rejected last year

The council considered establishing an ethics commission last year but ultimately rejected the idea. Councilwoman Linda Penniman had called for stricter enforcement of ethics after Naples Daily News reporting on a potential conflict of interest involving Councilman Sam Saad.

Saad in May 2016 joined the council in voting to approve a redevelopment at a property overseen by Saad’s business partner for a company that has hired Saad for legal work, the Daily News reported.

Penniman in April filed a complaint against Saad with the Florida Commission on Ethics. The complaint is pending.



Kamela Patton was honored for her dedication to Future Ready Collier, an association of more than 50 organizations that help prepare children for kindergarten, and high school students for college and careers.

LIAM JAMES DOYLE/
NAPLES DAILY NEWS

See a video of the award ceremony.
naplesnews.com

Superintendent

Continued from Page 1A

She also has helped organize college and vocational fairs and increased the district’s educational focus on science, technology, engineering and math.

Patton said the award was especially meaningful because it represents the collective efforts of dozens of organizations who have rallied behind the district’s goals.

“It benefits more kids quicker and faster when we’re able to lift up together,” she said. “You can’t do things by yourself, and this is just really an award representing all those partners.”

Susan McManus, president of Champions for Learning, the dedicated education foundation for Collier County that serves as the backbone for Future Ready Collier, said Patton’s work with the collection of organizations highlighted her strengths as a leader.

“It’s taken dedication, trust and hard work on her part to build those relationships and support all of us as we’re trying to work together,” McManus said.

It’s the reason McManus nominated Patton for the award.

“Community organizations can do some great work alone,” McManus said, “but when we’re doing it in alignment with the district and leveraging all of our resources, we know we are going to achieve much greater results.”

Patton also was honored for her leadership during Hurricane Irma, which hit Collier County on Sept. 10. The district opened 28 schools to serve as shelters to some 17,000 people, despite being prepared to open only 10 choices.

After the hurricane, Future Ready Collier joined with the district to devise a relief strategy and revamp FAFSA completion efforts, which had stalled due to the disaster.

“I’ve never seen that kind of leader-

ship and dedication on the part of this community,” McManus said, tearing up. “I’m not sure everyone knows how incredibly important that is.”

Patton is the first superintendent from Lee or Collier county to win the award, which is in its 11th year. John Ruis from Nassau County and Walt Griffin from Seminole County won in 2016 and 2015, respectively.

The award was presented at the 72nd annual Joint Conference of the Florida School Boards Association and the Florida Association of District School Superintendents in Tampa.

“The level of work that’s happening in concert with this collective impact group and the fact that she’s embraced it is a really big deal,” said Mary Chance, president of The Consortium of Florida Education Foundation.

The national award for superintendent of the year for Florida was given to Mike Grego, of Pinellas County, by a separate group, the American Association of School Administrators.