

Candidates for County Commission – District 4

Responses to League of Women Voters of Collier County Education Fund / eBella Magazine Survey  
June 2010

<p><b>Question 1:</b> Collier County is working to diversify its economic base by attracting high paying jobs. What role do you see for county government and the Collier County taxpayer in offering financial incentives to attract these businesses? Be specific.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fred Coyle</b></p> <p>Generally, government should create the environment and infrastructure in which an economy can flourish in accordance with supply and demand in a free market; however, after more than half a century, Collier County’s economy has <b>failed</b> to diversify beyond construction, tourism and agriculture which are vulnerable to economic downturns.</p> <p>When a transformation of our economy is needed, it is sometimes necessary to provide monetary incentives to attract “anchor” businesses. Carefully vetted financial incentives targeted for recession resistant high tech, bio-medical companies that provide high paying jobs could be a valuable investment in our future.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lavigne Ann Kirkpatrick</b></p> <p>A healthy, diversified economy will have all levels of paying jobs not just “high paying jobs”. County government’s role is to make opening a business easier, less expensive, and faster. Then, it should “get out of the way”. We need to create a new image for Collier County that welcomes businesses. We need to suspend Impact Fees for a limited time, streamline the approval process, and consider reductions of property taxes for selected areas within the county. All will encourage business and create jobs. Taxpayers can also contribute, but only if they were to approve it by referendum vote.</p>
<p><b>Question 2:</b> With the current state of the economy, Collier County government continues to face severe budget constraints. Where do you feel that there are additional opportunities to be more efficient? Assuming that there are no more opportunities for efficiency, what are your priorities for reduction in services?</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fred Coyle</b></p> <p>Collier County is consolidating elements of the Community Development and Transportation Departments, eliminating duplication and reducing staffing requirements. The Permitting and Review departments have been overhauled to be more efficient. Total staffing needs have been reduced by 415 personnel. The County budget is balanced because expenses have been reduced \$372 million during the past few years.</p> <p>To achieve additional savings, intervals for replacing county owned vehicles and road resurfacing are being extended. Additional capital improvements can be postponed because they are not necessary at our current rate of growth.</p> <p>It should <b>not</b> be necessary to reduce services to our citizens.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lavigne Ann Kirkpatrick</b></p> <p>I am in favor of a smaller government. Ours has grown steadily for the past ten years. I’d suspend county government’s future capital purchases wherever possible. I would evaluate our staffing and reorganize it to create the most efficient structure for providing services for the health, safety and welfare (well-being) of our residents without redundant layers of administration. There is a perception, caused by some misinformation, that the County has already reduced its staff headcount to the lowest possible level. The “reduction” has come by attrition and elimination of vacant positions, but more can be done, without sacrificing services.</p>

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<b>Question 3:</b> What are your two top priorities as County Commissioner? Be specific.	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fred Coyle</b></p> <p><u>ECONOMIC RECOVERY/DIVERSIFICATION.</u></p> <p>I want Collier County to emerge from this recession with a stronger, more vibrant economy than ever before. Economic diversification will produce a year-round economy with higher paying jobs that benefits us all. It will not only help our traditional businesses, it will set the stage for future economic prosperity.</p> <p><u>QUALITY OF LIFE.</u></p> <p>Most of us came to Collier County because it is such a wonderful, beautiful, safe place to live. Our quality of life is the envy of people throughout the world. I want to sustain the quality of life that makes Collier County unique.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lavigne Ann Kirkpatrick</b></p> <p>The first priority is obviously to encourage business activity and new job creation. My goal would be to do that without putting the burden of the cost associated with that on the taxpayers. My second priority is to put an end to wasteful charade of suing our Clerk of Courts in order to prevent him from auditing the County books. Millions have been spent and the taxpayers pay for all of it. With internal auditing the result would be a more transparent government. Ask yourself, “why does my government not open the books?” Let the audits begin!</p>