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Real estate exec set to fill commission seat

Bill Smith
Fort Myers News-Press
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Friday appointed Raymond Sandelli, a real estate executive and former U.S. Navy Blue Angel, to the vacant seat on the Lee

County Commission, replacing the late Larry Kiker.

He will be sworn in at the commission meeting Tuesday.

A resident of Bonita Springs, Sandelli was not among more than a dozen others who had filed applications for the post. He is managing partner of CRE

Consultants, a commercial real estate brokerage with a local office in Fort Myers.

"I didn't seek it out," Sandelli said in a telephone interview with The News-Press. "I was approached a couple of weeks ago to see if my name could be made available for consideration. I was

asked if I would consider serving and said yes and submitted the required paperwork and background material and it was a good fit."

More than a dozen county residents had formally applied for the position,

See **COMMISSION**, Page 6A



Lee and Charlotte counties are the two leaders in recycling in Florida. ALBERTO BOGO, GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

SWFL COUNTIES LEAD STATE IN RECYCLING

Gabe Stern
Fort Myers News-Press
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

If you line up 107 football fields side by side, the 1.5 million tons of waste that Lee County recycled in 2018 could fill all of them - and that's stacking the stuff 70 feet high.

The county's 77% recycling rate in 2018 ties it and Charlotte County as the

two leaders in recycling in Florida, Lee recently announced.

Lee County moved up from the No. 4 spot in 2017, when it had a 74% recycling rate. It was a goal for Lee County's Solid Waste department to move to the top spot the following year - which Lee County Solid Waste Communications Specialist Molly Schweers said they achieved through more thorough reporting of recyclable statistics.

"We were more aggressive about finding material that was being recycled but not reported," Schweers said.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection set a goal to reach a 75% recycling rate across the board by 2020, which is a measure of how much waste each county recycled divided by their total waste. But for now, Lee and

See **RECYCLING**, Page 6A

Bicyclist awarded \$2M in damages

Garrett Ammesmaki
Fort Myers News-Press
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

A jury awarded a Sanibel woman more than \$2 million in damages Wednesday, four years after being hit by a car while riding her bicycle on Sanibel Island, according to a press release from the Schlesinger Law Offices.

Mary Mitchell, 67, could have settled for \$450,000 in arbitration in April but decided to bring it to trial. The crash happened in April 2015.

See **BICYCLIST**, Page 6A

Arthrex touts shoulder replacement system

Laura Layden Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Need a shoulder replacement?

There's a new way to get one - developed by North Naples-based medical device manufacturer Arthrex.

On Thursday, Arthrex announced the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's clearance of its novel Eclipse system, describing it as a "game

See **ARTHREX**, Page 4A

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USA TODAY

A judge recommended firing the NYC policeman accused of using a chokehold in the 2014 death of Eric Garner. **16A**

Aid to help pay for Irma cleanup

FEMA has initiated another payment to Lee County for expenses related to the cleanup after the 2017 hurricane. **3A**

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Recycling

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Charlotte counties are the only two counties to exceed that goal – recycling rates sit in single digits across 10 counties, including Glades County's 1% recycling rate. Of Florida's 67 counties, 16 have a recycling rate that exceeds 50%.

Florida's combined recycling rate currently sits at 49%.

Lee and Charlotte counties were the only two to reach the state's goal for 2020 – Collier and Hendry counties recycling rates landed at 64% and 36%, respectively.

The increase in Lee County's recycling rate wasn't necessarily an increase in the amount of waste recycled, but an increase in what the county tracked: including scrap metal from businesses across the county, and demolition debris from construction sites.

When totaled together, construction debris makes up a third of the state's waste streams, according to Schweers.

"The initiative was working more closely with business partners to encourage them to give us the data. That there wasn't any threat to them, there was no downside to reporting," Schweers said. "Just building that relationship with the business community, that was the initiative, really."

It was the fourth time that Lee County led the state in recycling since 2000, according to the county's release.

The state's goal of a 75% recycling rate by 2020 is the end goal stemming from smaller state initiatives – including a 50% recycling rate in 2015, which has increased incrementally.

Charlotte County has led the county in recycling more recently, hovering at the top of the state's rankings and exceeding the 75% threshold for three years now, according to Lorenzo Daetz, Charlotte County's solid waste division supervisor.

Still, Charlotte County has undergone a similar process to Lee County to maintain their spot – among them, enticing local businesses to report all of what they recycle.

They've also found new materials to recycle, and new ways find them: asphalt and concrete are recyclable as long as it's not used in the same location. Yard debris can be converted into mulch or compost. If a furniture company reuses boxes used to deliver furniture, they can report it to the state.

"Basically it was digging into the weeds and finding out all these things that do actually count rather than the traditional (process where) you just get the numbers off the cart at a residential curbside," Daetz said.

But moving forward, goals for both counties include a push to educate residents on what can and can't be recycled, which will decrease contamination: in Charlotte County, this means an advertising campaign including print advertising, TV and movie theater advertisements and reaching county residents by mail – either with a post card, a letter or another way to reach residents directly.

"We're still getting prices on what the most cost-effective way to get that envelope in your hand," Daetz said. "And to make it in such a way that you're going to actually read it."

Commission

Continued from Page 1A

including Kiker's widow, Paula Kiker, who has filed to run as a candidate for the District 3 seat in the 2020 election.

Sandelli, who will turn 71 next Friday, has spent more than 40 years in the commercial real estate business in markets around the country, beginning in Seattle. He worked in several markets in the Midwest, moving into management with CBRE Group running its Florida operations.

He chose to be based in Tampa rather than Jacksonville.

"I chose to come to Tampa because I always loved the west coast," he said. "When I got down here, like most people we found that it was a very attractive way of life, I liked how the market was going and it's been seven years."

One of his colleagues at CRE's local office, Stan Stouder, noted that Sandelli's executive responsibilities over the years has included managing multi-million dollars budgets and people of "different ilks and personalty and

responsibility" which are well-suited to his new role.

"For the bulk of his career, he has been reconciling people and diverse agendas to come to a common ground," Stouder said. "He is a hard worker, he has good insight into people and he is not about a selfish agenda, he is about a communal agenda."

Putting a real estate executive on the commission could raise some eyebrows because the board makes decisions on real estate issues, ranging from zoning and comprehensive plan changes for residential and commercial property to Conservation 20/20 acquisitions.

Sandelli said he does not believe his professional career will conflict with his responsibility in public office.

"I don't see the conflict," he said. "I have one goal and that's really what's in the best interest of Lee County and how we coordinate with the rest of South-west Florida,"

The Kiker seat expires next year, and Sandelli is undecided whether he will seek a full term, adding that he will make that decision as he serves in the post.

Paula Kiker said she intends to remain in the race.

"Yes I'm still running," she said.

"I'm just glad District 3 has a repre-

sentative, finally," Kiker said. "The process was taking so much time, I can't tell you how many phone calls I received asking if I could help them."

Kiker said Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass "has been amazing" in handling requests from her late husband's constituents that need the help of an elected official.

Commissioner John Manning also said that bringing the board to full strength is important now that the summer break is over.

"I look forward to working with him," Manning said. "It gives the board a five-member full complement of commissioners."

A 1970 graduate of Monmouth University in New Jersey, Sandelli served nearly 9 years in the Navy, capping his career as one of the aviators in the Blue Angels flight demonstration group.

"I think when I was growing up, the only thing I really wanted to do was fly airplanes and so I worked at airports as a young boy and pumped gas and watched airplanes," Sandelli said. "It was tremendous to serve and wear the uniform of our country. It was one of the most meaningful experiences of my life. You learn a lot about yourself and you learn about teamwork."

Algae

Continued from Page 3A

major source of bloom-feeding nutrients: fertilizer runoff from agriculture.

Members agreed the voluntary "best management practices" designed to curtail high nutrient loads in agricultural runoff don't seem to be working.

The state, said Florida Chief Science Officer Tom Frazer, who leads the panel, may need to try something "radically different," although there was no indication what that might entail.

On Thursday, the panel looked at another nutrient source: the state's 2.4 million septic systems.

Septic systems

But before they can make a recommendation on how to deal with septic systems, members said more research is needed to determine how much the tanks contribute to algae blooms.

Gary Goforth, a Stuart environmental engineer who previously designed water treatment systems for the South Florida Water Management District, told the panel less than 10 percent of the nitrogen in the St. Lucie River estuary comes from septic tanks.

And the estuary never gets large blue-green algae blooms unless the stuff is discharged from Lake Okeechobee.

If the tanks are 5% of the problem, Parsons said, "we don't want to spend 50% of our resources on them."

Because it would be impractical and too expensive to study all the state's septic systems, members agreed efforts

should be focused on the most vulnerable areas, particularly around springs and along the state's coasts.

The Florida Department of Health estimates 40% of the state's septic tanks are in environmentally sensitive areas.

About 110,000 septic tanks are in use along the Treasure Coast. There are as many as 600,000 septic tanks in the five counties along the Indian River Lagoon.

Charged with making recommendations on regulations and policies that steer water quality in the Sunshine State, the task force will meet for up to seven years and deliver ideas on everything from nutrient management to water storage.

The fifth task force member, Evelyn Gaiser, executive director of the School of Environment, Arts and Society at Florida International University in Miami, was not at the meeting.

Bicyclist

Continued from Page 1A

"Ultimately, we all felt that was not at all an accurate measure of the extent of this woman's injuries, pain, suffering and damages," said Bryan Hofeld, lead attorney for Mitchell.

Mitchell was riding her bicycle through a crosswalk when she was hit by Steven Anderson, who was on vacation from Minnesota.

Mitchell suffered a broken wrist and a broken hip, according to court documents.

She is "happy," with the verdict, but she still suffers from her injuries.

"There's no magic wand for this," Hofeld said. "She still has significant



Hofeld

medical problems that she will have on a permanent basis because of this accident."

Mitchell initially had a "great" recovery, but developed chronic hip pain, which continued for several years.

Within the last year, the hip pain began to get worse until she was no longer able to ride her bike, the release said. Mitchell also has difficulty participating in her favorite hobbies, such as sculpting and gardening.

According to Hofeld, the pain is caused by a metal screw putting pressure on soft tissue. Mitchell is also prone to developing post-traumatic arthritis because of the accident, a painful and progressive condition.

"She will need medical care for the rest of her life," Hofeld said.

Initially, the defense denied any negligence in the case.

A day before the trial, Anderson admitted to being negligent but disputed the severity of Mitchell's injuries, Hofeld said.

"The evidence is pretty overwhelming that it was his fault," he said. "There was really no question."

The trial lasted two days and the verdict was filed Wednesday night, with the court awarding Mitchell \$2,181,631.33 in total damages.

The jury deliberated for 37 minutes, which is "pretty quick," Hofeld said.

"Usually, when it doesn't take long like that, it tends not to be good for the plaintiff," he said. "But that obviously wasn't the case here."

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