

**FEATURED
WITHIN:**

**THE POWERS
OF THE
GAINESVILLE
CITY**

**COMMISSION ▶
NIGHTLIFE IN**

**THE CITY ▶
WHAT'S GOING
ON WITH
AMENDMENT**

**2? ▶ WILD
SPACES, PUBLIC
PLACES:
ASSESSING THE**

**IMPACT ▶ A CITY
COMMISSION
VOTE COULD
CHANGE YOUR
MONTHLY
UTILITY**

**BILL ▶ DISTRICT
2 AT LARGE**

RACE ▶ DISTRICT

2 RACE ▶

DISTRICT 3 RACE



**LET'S
TALK
GNV**

**LET'S TALK GNV IS A PUBLICATION PRODUCED BY THE BOB GRAHAM CENTER
STUDENT FELLOWS ▶ VIEWS EXPRESSED WITHIN DO NOT NECESSARILY
MIRROR THE STANCES OF THE BOB GRAHAM CENTER ▶ COVER ILLUSTRATION
BY ZIQI WANG**

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS ▶ AUSTIN YOUNG ▶ CAROLINE NICKERSON

How can I make a difference?

Scrolling through Facebook, watching the news or even reading your textbook can make the problems we face appear at a scale too large for any one college student to affect. But we have good news – there's a remedy for this feeling.

A better world starts with those issues closest to you: literally and physically closest to you, even if going to Mars, enacting health care reform or pursuing Wall Street regulations are closest to your heart. Local politics is where change starts, and luckily, it's the easiest place to make a difference. I'm not talking about volunteering in your community. I'm talking local politics.

Hardly anyone votes in local elections – and the percentage is even worse when you isolate students. There is, in a way, something positive that comes from this: Your vote is far more heavily weighted in a local election. If students got together and turned out in huge numbers on March 14 and for every election thereafter, we could really change the future.

That's what Let's Talk GNV is all about: Spreading awareness about the candidates and issues at stake in our city elections. We don't pretend to offer in-depth analysis or even cover every single important issue. We're here to start a conversation, to pique your interest and encourage further research.

As fellow students, we pledge to be honest and direct in our mission to get you in-the-know and in the voting booth.

Let's Talk. Let's Vote.

Peace and respect,

Austin Young
Third Year; Political Science and Religion

Caroline Nickerson
Fourth Year; History and Chinese

On a daily basis, how many times do you interact with transportation, utilities, city facilities and activities or local ordinances? The City Commission is responsible for all these things and the budget that pays for them. On March 14, almost half of the commission's seats are being challenged in a local election.

The Commission is composed of six district representatives and one elected mayor. Four of the seats are based on geographic districts, while the mayor and two other commissioners are elected at-large, or by the entire city. There are two geographic districts and one At-Large district up for grabs in March, meaning everyone in Gainesville can vote in at least one race no matter where they live.

Gainesville city elections are nonpartisan, though members running for office often personally identify with a political party. However, they cannot advertise their personal political party on any campaign literature.

According to the Gainesville Sun, Democrats outnumber Republicans two-to-one in Gainesville.

Both parties often contribute to campaigns for the city commission.

Gainesville city elections often have dismal turnout, especially from students. If it's not a presidential election year, usually less than 10 percent of UF students vote in city races. This is sad, but it means that your vote will likely carry more weight on March 14 than in any election in which you've voted before. Even though most students only spend 4 to 5 years in Gainesville, there will always be a large student population and it's our job to make Gainesville a great community for generations of Gators to come.

Adrian Hayes-Santos, the district 4 city commissioner, believes that student issues will be truly represented when students turnout to March elections in large numbers. If students voted, they could impact "how the buses are set up and change renters' rights," Hayes-Santos said.

Hayes-Santos tells students to "vote where you live ... as long as you are in Gainesville, it is your home, and the decisions of the city commission affect your life."





The state of Florida oversees alcohol licenses and is the ultimate arbiter in the regulation of bars. However, the city has several powers, and continues to pass readings and ordinances on the issue. Under state law, the city can only control bar hours and whether or not the bar can allow 18- to 20-year-olds.

In fact, in December 2012, the city did just that: commissioners relaxed alcohol ordinances, allowing bars and restaurants to sell alcohol from 7 a.m. to 2 a.m. on Sundays, when they previously could not. This decision was made with small Midtown and Downtown business owners in mind.

In every decision regarding alcohol laws, commissioners must weigh the concerns of business owners, the impact on student safety and desires of voters against each other, and then act accordingly.

In 2009, the Gainesville City Commission issued an initially successful underage alcohol prohibition

ordinance. The ordinance intends to punish bad behavior by bars serving to minors, rather than putting a punitive focus on the underage alcohol consumer, who currently receives a civil citation when caught drinking.

This ordinance prohibits a bar from admitting 18- to 20-year-olds at night for a limited time if too many underage drinkers are caught on its premises.

However, the ordinance has not been enforced since 2014 due to a change in legal interpretation. Thus, presently, bars do not suffer any consequences when underage drinkers are caught on the premises by the police.

The issue will likely be discussed by the commission in the coming months.

You might have heard fully potent medical marijuana is now legal in Florida. You might have voted on the constitutional amendment that brought about this change last November. However, there is another election coming up which will also influence how patients in Gainesville will be able to access this new medication. It's on March 14, when elections will be held for three seats on the city commission.

While the city commission doesn't have the power to outlaw medical cannabis consumption now that it is enshrined in our state's constitution, they do have the power to restrict where dispensaries can be located.

They can even forbid the construction of dispensaries in the first place through a moratorium. In fact, by the time our constitution was officially updated at the beginning of the 2017, 55 cities (like Miami Beach, Hialeah, Orlando, etc.) had banned the construction of medical marijuana dispensaries – most for a period of six months or until the state legislature finishes writing the laws which will govern marijuana consumption statewide.

District 4 City
Commissioner Adrian
Hayes-Santos stressed

that as a “medical need” the city should ensure its codes provide marijuana access for all patients who need it.

According to Hayes-Santos, although there's a consensus on the Commission that Gainesville should not outright ban dispensaries, “There definitely are discrepancies on where they should be located and how restricted those areas should be...”

Already there are a few ideas floating around such as forbidding dispensaries 750 feet from a school, 300 feet from churches and 500 feet from other dispensaries. So far, there's one tentatively approved dispensary for a location on Southwest 34th Street. Santos expects the commission to vote on these regulations in February.

However, while it's important voters take an interest in the local elections on March 15th for many reasons, ensuring access to medical marijuana is surely one of them. The new commissioners will have just as much power as those in power now to add new regulations making harder or easier to find medical marijuana in Gainesville.



On Election day this past November, Alachua County voters passed the Wild Spaces & Public Places “Environmental Lands, Parks and Recreation One-Half Percent Sales Tax” with 60.4% of the vote. Supporters of this ballot measure argued that it will better enable the county to protect environmentally sensitive lands for current and future generations of residents.

However, it will be up to the city commission to decide how to allocate the funds between conservation land (“wild spaces”) and public buildings, parks, and developments (“public places”). This is an important dichotomy to recognize, right off the bat. The tax is deliberately divided into both categories because they may not always line up— a potential issue that will be explored later on in the article.

You may have voted on this ballot measure last November. Whether or not you did, you may still be wondering how it could affect you personally. Pegeen Hanrahan, former Mayor of Gainesville and Campaign Manager for the Wild Spaces & Public Places ballot initiative, believes the answer to this question is that UF students should “look into facilities and programming located in the areas that students live.”

One example is a downtown development called Depot Park, which may eventually contain a music venue, thanks in part to funding from a 2009-10 Wild Spaces sales tax. The funding from this newly passed tax will be used in part to complete Depot Park.

There are nine municipalities in Alachua County: Alachua, Archer, Gainesville, Hawthorne, High Springs, La Crosse, Micanopy, Newberry and Waldo. Each of the municipalities has compiled a project list for these sorts of investment projects, but Hanrahan specified that “they are not allowed to add any more to the list.”

Gainesville, as one of the biggest municipalities, has a whopping 99 projects listed for future development! Gainesville’s list can be found on the Wild Spaces and Public Places website, and includes diverse projects from nature parks to improving the Bo Diddley Community Plaza to memorials and middle schools.

It is unlikely that the funds raised from this tax will be enough for every listed project in the municipalities, but Tom Kay, director of the Alachua Conservation Trust and WSPP Campaign Treasurer, told me that one of the main benefits of the WSPP Program was that it gave the county leverage in a practice called “price-matching” in grants. Now that Alachua County has the ability to supply its own funds, they are hopeful that, especially in the realm of land conservation, they can use this technique to double or triple their initial investment amount using community/state/federal partnerships.

I talked to Harvey Ward and Craig Carter, both City of Gainesville Commissioners running for re-election this March, and they expressed shared approval of how smooth the WSPP process has been so far. Ward said that since they are able to project tax revenues for the next eight years, when the sales tax will be in place, they should also be able to “bond” some of it, which means loaning money to the municipalities through a process in which you can loan money through municipalities and they’re reimbursed afterwards. Carter also touched upon the process of allocating the funds, which depends upon an algorithm that factors in population size. Gainesville, being the largest municipality in Alachua County, will receive roughly 58 million dollars over the course of the sales tax. There will be 3 million set aside for a joint project between the county and the municipalities, and an additional 3 million for the smaller municipalities to bid on.

According to Mayor of Gainesville Lauren Poe, about half of the money raised overall will go towards natural land and water protection, with the other half going towards parks, recreation, cultural events, trails, and so on. An independent oversight committee will be established to oversee the funds. While the lists for the municipalities have already been decided upon, through public votes, the order in which the projects are carried out is still variable; Poe says that while citizens are welcome to advocate for certain projects, “we have to look at money and efficiency, like doing similar projects at the same time to take advantage of our resources.”

So here's how the tax will work: a one-half percent sales tax will be levied for eight years (starting January 1, 2017) in order to fund the extension of the Alachua County Forever Program. Kay told me that the sales tax is projected to raise \$130 million for the fund. A sales tax like this is not unusual— Alachua County is 1 out of only 9 counties in the state's 67 that does not already have a local option sales tax in which revenue returns to the community itself. Since Florida has a base 6% sales tax, starting January 1, 2017, Alachua County will have a 6.5% sales tax. This tax will not apply to groceries, medicine, services, or any other basic necessities.

This last detail caused Kendrick Meek Jr., a second-year political science student, to shift from opposition to support of the tax. "Originally, I was against the amendment on the grounds that it would place another burden on Gainesville's

poorest and most vulnerable residents," he says, but researching the tax and realizing that food and medicine were exempt and it primarily taxed consumer goods like electronics and furniture caused him to change his mind. After a visit to Depot Park, which Meek said was "one of the best parks [he's] ever visited", he voted yes to the sales tax.

This shows the importance of researching ballot items before making a decision about them. As students, our involvement certainly starts, but does not have to end, with voting in local elections that contain ballot measures like Wild Spaces & Public Places. After all, students enrolled in UF or Santa Fe may be transient populations, but for now, we are here. For four years— maybe less, maybe more— we call Alachua County our home. And so I believe we must also do our part in protecting it.



A CITY COMMISSION VOTE COULD CHANGE YOUR MONTHLY UTILITY BILL ► ARTICLE BY JONATHAN MUÑOZ ► ILLUSTRATION BY ZIQI WANG

Moving into your own place, away from your parents for the first time, is always a big moment. My junior year, I made the jump from an apartment complex to a house. I knew I was going to be trading the thin, hastily constructed walls of my cookie-cutter apartment for an aged, yet solid, four-bedroom, two-bathroom house situated just a few blocks north of campus. However, what I didn't realize was that I'd also be trading in the luxury of long showers, with endless hot water, for the lingering uneasiness of monitoring how many times I leave the lights on when I'm out of the house. That's right; I switched from paying a monthly flat rental rate with utilities included (and no overages) in my apartment complex to a much lower monthly rental rate -- but one that required my also having to pay for utilities each month.

Any UF student living in Gainesville who pays for basic utilities--electricity, water, wastewater, and gas--knows that Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU) is the sole provider of utilities in the area. The effective monopoly GRU has on the allocation of utilities gives them significant flexibility on the rates they charge for utilities. Electricity, water, and wastewater are the main three utilities used by households in the Gainesville area.

Currently, electric service to a residential home contains four sub-rates. First is the customer charge of \$14.25, a monthly flat-rate. Next is the tier 1 rate of \$0.0430 per kilowatt hour (kWh), which covers up to 850 kWh. If you exceed 850 kWh for that month, a tier 2 rate of \$0.0640 per kWh is applied to your bill. Finally, a fuel adjustment fee is applied per the total kilowatt hours used in that month. This final fuel adjustment fee is subject to change monthly. For water services, a standard water customer charge of \$9.45 is added to your bill each month. The tier 1 rate of \$2.45 per kilogallon (kGal) is applied to up to 4 kGal. If you exceed 4 kGal of water, you must pay the tier 2 rate of \$3.75 per every additional kilogallon of water up to 16 kilogallons. Finally, a Tier 3 rate of \$6.00 per kGal is charged if you exceed 16 kGal. For wastewater services, the customer charge is a flat rate of \$9.45, and a waste water billing rate of \$6.30 per kGal. To get a picture of how these rates apply to the average college student's home, see the

attached image of my own GRU bill for December 2016.

Without any perspective or context, these rates probably don't seem abnormal. However, according to a recent draft report by UF Economics Professor and GRU Utility Advisor Board member Dr. Dave Denslow, the 2015 GRU residential rates were 16% higher than the national average.

A major spike in residential rates occurred in 2013 when the Gainesville Renewable Energy Center Purchasing Power Agreement (GREC PPA) took effect and has since been a stain on the Gainesville City Commission's history. This 100-megawatt biomass power facility located at 11201 NW 13th St., Gainesville, Fla. 32653 provides 30 percent of GRU's electrical energy. The biomass plant burns local wood waste and emits zero net carbon dioxide during biomass combustion. This clean, renewable energy source comes at a steep cost.

In April of 2009 GRU signed a 30-year contract with GREC for the continued purchase of all of the electric power produced at the GREC facility at a cost that could exceed \$3 billion, according to a lawsuit filed in 2013 by GRU against GREC. More importantly, this contract has also had significant effects on the rates that residents pay for their utilities, as GRU was forced to raise prices in order to cover costs. According to Dr. Dave Denslow's draft report, overall GRU rates are likely 23 percent higher as a result of the Purchasing Power Agreement with GREC.

Gainesville Regional Utility is unique in that it is a municipally owned utility company (MOU). Article 3 Section 6 of the City of Gainesville Charter states that the general manager of the utility system, which by default is GRU, "shall serve at the will of the commission." This means that GRU is under the jurisdiction of the Gainesville City Commission and therefore accountable to the city constituents.

Electric Service Details

Meter Number	METER READING DATES Previous	METER READING DATES Present	Meter Read Type	Days of Service	METER READINGS Previous	METER READINGS Present	Meter Multiplier	Electric Consumption	Peak Demand	Next Meter Read on or About
E024941006	11/15/2016	12/12/2016	ACTUAL	28	81508	82372	1.00000	864 kWh	N/A	01/12/2017
Description			Usage	Rate	Amount					
ELECTRIC CUSTOMER CHARGE				\$ 14.25	\$ 14.25					
ENERGY USE, TIER 1 (1 - 850 kWh)			850	\$ 0.0430	\$ 36.55					
ENERGY USE, TIER 2 (OVER 850 kWh)			14	\$ 0.0640	\$ 0.90					
ELECTRIC FUEL ADJUSTMENT			864	\$ 0.0700	\$ 60.48					
FLORIDA GROSS RECEIPTS TAX					\$ 2.88					
GAINESVILLE ELEC UTIL TAX					\$ 5.46					
Total for Electric Service Details					\$ 120.52					



Water and Wastewater Service Details

Meter Number	METER READING DATES Previous	METER READING DATES Present	Meter Read Type	Days of Service	METER READINGS Previous	METER READINGS Present	Meter Multiplier	Water Consumption	Wastewater Consumption	Next Meter Read on or About
W79353138	11/15/2016	12/12/2016	ACTUAL	28	93	99	1.00000	6 xGals	6 xGals	01/12/2017
Description			Usage	Rate	Amount					
WATER CUSTOMER CHARGE				\$ 9.45	\$ 9.45					
WATER USE, TIER 1 (1 - 4 kGals)			4	\$ 2.4500	\$ 9.80					
WATER USE, TIER 2 (5 - 16 kGals)			2	\$ 3.7500	\$ 7.50					
GAINESVILLE WATER UTIL TAX					\$ 2.68					
WASTEWATER CUSTOMER CHARGE				\$ 9.10	\$ 9.10					
WASTEWATER BILLING			6	\$ 6.3000	\$ 37.80					
Total for Water and Wastewater Service Details					\$ 76.33					



The City Commission has made strides to improve the accountability of GRU through the creation of a Utility Advisory Board that reports directly to the Commissioner on GRU policy. Nevertheless, there is still much to be done by the individual voter.

At a joint meeting between the City Commission and the Utility Advisory Board on January 12, 2017 debate commenced over amount of freedom GRU should be given in legal matters, such as drafting contracts. Commissioner for District 1 Charles Goston questioned the integrity of the way the GREC deal was presented to the Commission and the public.

“When you look at the fact that you had certain people on the Commission, and the people who ran GRU at that time, to say that we’re going to redact certain parts of this contract so that the public cannot see it, that was another red flag. But

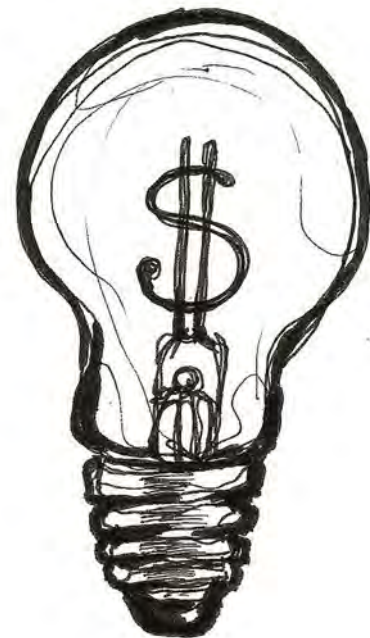
nobody on the Commission cared enough to vote against it,” Goston said.

He went on to say, “We needed to have someone sitting on the Commission who cared enough about the rate payers, and the future of GRU, to say something and do something about it.”

March 6th marks the beginning of early voting for the Gainesville City Commission elections. There are three seats on the ballot this election: the District 2 Seat, the District 3 Seat, and one of the two At-Large Seats. Early voting runs through March 11th and is being held at the Supervisor of Elections office, the Millhopper Branch Library, and Cone Park Library.

If you miss early voting, Election Day is March 14th.

If you’re hesitant to go out and vote, remember that your vote could determine how long your showers can be.



GAINESVILLE CITY COMMISSION DISTRICT 2 AT LARGE ► ARTICLE BY ANGEL GONZAELZ

The seat for District 2 At-Large is up for grabs in this election cycle. Anyone registered to vote in Gainesville can vote in an At-Large race, regardless of where they live. On March 14th incumbent Helen Warren is being challenged by Jenn Powell for one of the At-Large districts.

Jenn Powell According to her campaign website, Powell is a working mother who currently serves on the Citizen's Advisory Committee for Community Development and the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee within Gainesville. Her Facebook profile shows that she previously served as a delegate for Bernie Sanders in Florida's 5th District during the 2016 Presidential Race. Her primary focus is to reduce levels of inequality, homelessness, and poverty in Gainesville. Powell's website platform outlines her desire to form a commission to handle Gainesville's biomass plant and renegotiate the city's 30 year contract with Gainesville Renewable Energy Center to lower utility rates for consumers. According to her campaign's Facebook page, the Suwanee - St. Johns Group Sierra Club has endorsed her for her platform's focus on environmentalism.

Powell's campaign Facebook page mentions her interest in providing high-speed Internet to larger sections of Gainesville and points out the lack of choice that customers have with Internet providers. Powell has demonstrated concern that City Commission races are influenced by out-of-town corporations and developers and wishes to end the preferential treatment over local business she claims this dynamic creates. At a questionnaire hosted by the Alachua County Labor Coalition, Powell expressed support for a local Anti-Corruption Law and stated that she believes money in politics is one of the biggest issues that face US democracy today. While Powell was not available for comment on student issues, her campaign's Facebook page included a poll open to UF and Santa Fe students asking about the affordability of the new luxury student apartment complexes being constructed throughout Gainesville.

Helen K. Warren Warren is the incumbent for this seat and a Democrat. Prior to her work on the City Commission, she worked as a realtor

for Berkshire Hathaway and served as President of the Alachua Audubon Society. According to her campaign website, Warren's past work includes being a Task Member on Phase II of the Envision Alachua project. According to the project's website, the Envision Alachua effort was started by Plum Creek (now Weyerhaeuser), to include community input in the development plans for the large segments of agricultural land in Eastern and Northern Gainesville owned by the company. At her opening statement delivered at the project, Warren stated her primary interest was economic development and educational opportunities for the community.

Warren's work as acting City Commissioner included implementation of a multi-modal transportation model across the city, including an increase in areas serviced by RTS and offering more accessibility to senior citizens. Warren highlighted these accomplishments at her public forum in conjunction with the Gainesville Citizens for Active Transportation, which has endorsed her in this race. Her website outlines her plan to further economic development which includes working with universities and the Chamber of Commerce to attract new jobs. Warren's plans discuss environmental protection and support for public transit systems that do not rely on fossil fuels. When it comes to city energy sources, she has also recommended diversifying Gainesville's portfolio of natural resources.

Her plan includes a social justice platform that aims to divert gang recruitment and address homelessness in Gainesville. In a video on her campaign Facebook page Warren demonstrated support for the city setting the path to a \$15 minimum wage in the future. At the same interview, hosted by the Alachua County Labor Coalition and posted online on January 14th, Warren said that she would not work to enact policy aimed at reducing the influence of private money in local elections, saying "I just do not see the opportunity for one's vote to be bought at the city or county level." The UF College Democrats, the Builders Association of North Central Florida, the African Americans for Accountability Alliance, and the Human Rights Council of North Central Florida have also endorsed her campaign. Warren was not available for further comment.

The seat for District 2 is up for grabs as the current Commissioner, Todd Chase, is leaving office after serving two terms. District 2 is comprised of Northwest Gainesville above the University of Florida campus. The district holds Devil's Millhopper State Park, Northwood, Springtree, and Hidden Lake and is adjacent to the GRU Utilities Center.

Perry R. Clawson According to his campaign website, Clawson is a veteran who served two combat tours in Iraq and received a Purple Heart after sustaining injuries from an IED blast that left him medically retired as a Colonel. He now works in Gainesville for several veteran organizations and sits on the Board of Directors for the Fisher House at the Malcolm Randall VA Hospital next to Shands Hospital. As his website outlines, Clawson is very critical of GRU and sees renegotiating its oversight of electricity as a way to reduce costs for consumers. Clawson also sees City Commission races as non-partisan and is against moving spring elections to fall, as he claims that it leads to partisan races. Clawson aims to keep roads well maintained and advocate for a transparent city commission. Former Gainesville Mayor, Mac McEachern, has endorsed Clawson in a post on Facebook, citing him as a "non-partisan" solution to what he sees as a political machine controlling the city commission. Clawson was not available for further comment on student issues.

Sheryl S. Eddie According to her campaign site, Eddie has lived in Gainesville for almost thirty years, as a passionate advocate for children's welfare. Among her top priorities as a City Commissioner is to reform the RTS bus system to allow more access to non-student passengers by refurbishing roads and building climate covers and benches at underserved areas of the city. She has also outlined a strategy to reutilize older buses as mobile computer labs to help underserved neighborhoods. Ms. Eddie wants to increase the minimum wage for all government employees, including seasonal employees, and wants to pursue ways to get all Gainesville employees earning above \$40,000/year. Eddie believes sustainable energy alternatives can provide lower costs for customers and considers GRU an asset to Gainesville. Eddie supports

Gainesville Police's training initiatives to better respond to mental health and substance abuse cases, and supports having police officers wear body cameras. She supports the Grace Market Place, a homelessness shelter that also provides mental health counseling and treatment. Eddie was not available for further comment on student issues.

Harvey Ward Jr. Ward currently works as executive director of the Holy Trinity Episcopal Foundation. On his campaign website, he outlines a need for rescheduling Gainesville City Commissioner elections that currently take place in March to the fall so that all seats are voted for at the same time. Ward has suggested broad reforms in how the city handles Internet in an effort to lower provider costs while increasing fiber optic connection – a move he believes will provide students with faster Internet. He has suggested that GPD officers should wear body cameras to promote trust with the community. Ward has publicly supported closing the wage gap between male and female Gainesville employees. Also high on his priorities are streamlining of how transportation is handled and improving senior citizens' access to public transportation and medical care. Ward is a supporter of GRU but wants to work towards sustainable energy solutions that would lower costs. Ward was not available for further comment on other student issues.

GAINESVILLE CITY COMMISSION DISTRICT 3 ► ARTICLE BY HANNAH TABOR ► ILLUSTRATION BY GLORIA LI

On March 14th, David Arreola will face off with incumbent Craig Carter for the district three Gainesville city commission seat in our local elections.

The two men differ greatly in background and age, and their agendas emphasize different goals for Gainesville.

At 25, Arreola could become the youngest member of the City Commission in city history and also the first Mexican American. He believes what most qualifies him for this position is his life experience in Gainesville, particularly his experience as a first-generation American. As someone who calls Gainesville his hometown after twenty years of residency, Arreola said that his "vision for Gainesville is much more future-oriented." Some of the key issues that Arreola believes drive his campaign are the losses in Gainesville's historic tree canopy, city and county relationships with the citizens and Gainesville's need for improvements in transportation infrastructure.

At the age of fifteen, Arreola began his first job as a student branch manager for the Florida Credit Union. Today, he is the director of sales and marketing at a local business, 21st Century Communications. Arreola served as campaign manager for the Adrian Hayes-Santos campaign for City Commission last year, a win which had the highest winning margin in Gainesville's history. Last year, he served as Alachua County's youngest delegate to the Democratic National Convention, and he currently belongs the Alachua County Young Democrats. Arreola continues to keep busy in the community as a member of the Alachua County Emerging Leaders and Leadership Gainesville 43, and he plans to hold a board position for Family Promise of Gainesville after the election.

He said he wants to foster a positive work environment where people work together for the common good. "Whenever we disagree with someone whether at work or in the office we have to show up, we don't get a choice to not show up, so I think more leadership is needed in that arena."

Arreola concluded by saying, "I live my life day to day understanding that I am one of the most privileged citizens in one of the most privileged countries, so I live life being humbled by this fact and being a good neighbor and a loving person."

Craig Carter, the incumbent candidate, said that he tries to promote better relationships between citizens and elected officials by talking to them and hearing what their issues or hurdles are, whether that be with day to day issues or with running/starting small businesses. In end, he finds the relationships he builds with constituents as very valuable. "It's the highlight of my job," he said. "I don't know who I'm going to meet the next day".

During his time as City Commissioner (2014-present), Carter said he has worked to help change Gainesville's direction to become more citizen-focused. Recognizing that Gainesville companies and residents pay some of the highest electric rates across the state, Carter has worked to reduce these costs.

As a successful small business owner, Carter understands how important it is that commissioners effectively listen to and negotiate with the leaders of the local economy. He has helped to implement the Citizens-Centered campaign through the Blue Ribbon Committee (a committee to evaluate, research and make recommendations to the City Commission), which is a campaign still in its infancy that he hopes to continue to grow if re-elected. Out of the Blue Ribbon Committee comes a new Department of Doing. Carter believes that, in the very near future, any citizen of Gainesville will have an easy, one-stop spot to gain knowledge on every aspect of starting a small business in Gainesville.

In addition, Carter has advocated for renewable energy sources such as biomass and solar energy, but believes the policies in place currently need to be altered so that the citizens aren't left on the hook for soaring costs at the biomass plant.



Carter believes people should be concerned when we have seven identically thinking commissioners who don't communicate with the public. Currently there is a diverse group of people, which equates to good dialogue across the board. He refers to work on the commission as a "team sport," with listening to others and working cooperatively being imperative in achieving positive results.

When there is a disagreement, Carter said he first tries to find out where people are inflexible. From there, his goal is to understand why people feel the way they do and share his own feelings honestly in order to establish a consensus. "I'll change my vote all the time," Carter said, and indicating that he doesn't mind admitting he is wrong. "You have to be a team player and come to a compromise."



Carter emphasizes the importance of keeping consistent contact between the public and city officials in Gainesville. "I have almost three years' experience. I have a proven track record of engaging the citizens, engaging the staff and taking their advice, and working with them," said Carter.

As he seeks another term on the commission, Craig Carter said he will continue living by his motto. "Help the unable and encourage the unwilling."

Want to ask the candidates some questions in person?

Come out to the City Commission Candidate forum on March 1st at 6PM in Pugh Hall! Moderated by the Student Fellows at the Bob Graham Center for Public Service.

A huge thank you to the Bob Graham Center for Public Service at UF for supporting this publication and giving us the freedom to write what we choose. This is truly a student effort, but we couldn't do it without the amazing support from those great folks at Pugh Hall.

