

# Activist rails against city manager's choice of chief, questions hiring method

BY EVAN WILLIAMS  
ewilliams@floridaweekly.com

Although the Lee County sheriff and police chiefs in many Florida cities must campaign for their jobs, the Fort Myers police chief is not a position subjected to a public election.

One local activist is trying to change that.

Anthony Thomas, president of Citizens for a Better Fort Myers Government, hopes to collect 2,500 signatures so Fort Myers' nearly 65,000 citizens can decide if electing their next police chief is a good move.

He has plenty of opposition in local government and the police force of which he has been highly critical in the past. Mr. Thomas said the police chief the city will most likely appoint this time is "a vote that beating your wife and picking on homosexuals is ok."

City spokesperson Jennifer Hobbic said, "We almost just don't comment on anything Anthony brings up. That's his right...We have a system (of choosing a police chief) in place and that works for us."

Ward 6 Councilman Tom Leonardo agreed.

"I don't think the position of police chief should be an elected position," he said. "You pick the best person for the job based on all their qualities and go from there. You should not politicize that position."

The last time Fort Myers citizens got to vote on whether or not to elect a chief — in that case, the chief executive of the city — they decided they'd rather not. That's why two years ago, the city shifted from a strong mayor system where the elected mayor is the city's chief executive to a weak mayor and hired City Manager William "Billy" Mitchell. Today, the mayor has the same vote as other council members, but leaves running the city to Mr. Mitchell.

When Police Chief Hilton Daniels retired last summer, the city council hired Slavin Consultants, the same firm that helped it find Mr. Mitchell, to conduct a nationwide search of 150 candidates for police chief. After narrowing the search to three, it was Mr. Mitchell's job to choose one. He picked Doug Baker, who started with the Fort Myers Police in 1986 and is currently serving as interim chief. City council members

must approve his choice, but have routinely spoken in his favor.

"(Doug Baker) is held with high regard in this community," Mr. Leonardo said.

And if Mr. Thomas succeeds in putting his charter amendment on the ballot, the vote won't come until fall 2009. The city will likely appoint Mr. Baker before the next scheduled meeting in January.

"It could be wrapped up any day," said spokesperson Ms. Hobbic.

Mr. Thomas is vehemently opposed to choosing Mr. Baker.

"Look at (Doug Baker's) record," he said. "If you were just evaluating him on the diversity that he lays out in the department, you'd say there's something wrong here."

He also points to records missed during Mr. Baker's evaluation, as evidence that the process of choosing him was "corrupt from the very beginning."

The records incident Mr. Baker was suspended in 1987 for allegedly harassing a man in a park who was soliciting sex. There were also divorce filings between Mr. Baker and his ex-wife, Dana Baker, in 1995, in which she accused him off abusing her verbally and physically, including causing a miscarriage.

Mr. Thomas plans to send the court filings to 4,000 women voters while seeking their signature to elect the police chief next time.

However, Bakers denied the allegations they made during the divorce proceedings, as did a spokesperson for the police department. Mr. Baker and City Manager Mr. Mitchell declined to comment on Anthony Thomas' group.

City leaders say it's a moot point.

"I read on public record where his former wife absolutely denied all the allegations against her former husband," said Councilman Mr. Leonardo. "This is a vendetta of Anthony Thomas against Doug Baker, and that's how I see it. He's a citizen of Fort Myers and his opinion is appreciated, I just don't agree with it." ■



Thomas

## YOUR FACE, OUR EXPERTISE.

### CONSIDERING FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY?

Dr. Prendiville is the area's pre-eminent specialist in facial plastic surgery and skin rejuvenation. You can expect the latest advances, the greatest respect and tailored treatments that meet your goals. Most importantly, you can expect natural results that let you be your own kind of beautiful. Because that's what real beauty is.



**SPECIAL PRICING AVAILABLE.**

Call **239.437.3900** or visit us online at [www.DrPrendiville.com](http://www.DrPrendiville.com).  
9407 Cypress Lake Drive, Unit A  
Fort Myers, Florida 33919



THE ONLY FELLOWSHIP TRAINED, DOUBLE BOARD CERTIFIED, FACIAL PLASTIC SURGEON IN FT. MYERS.

## Buying a Waterfront Property?

We offer a **FREE** inspection of the existing dock and or boat lift. Need a dock or boat lift? Let us create your perfect design! Call today for special pricing.

**CALL NOW**  
10,000 lb lift installed  
\$6,500.00



CUSTOM DOCKS AND BOAT LIFTS  
**239-489-3625**

**STOKES MARINE**  
[www.stokesmarine.com](http://www.stokesmarine.com)

Lic.#CBC 1251150

# DUNKIN'S DIAMONDS

## Going Out of Business Prices



UP TO  
**75% OFF**

ENTIRE DIAMOND & JEWELRY INVENTORY

EVERYTHING MUST GO!  
**SALE ENDS SOON!**

**3 STORES CLOSING FOREVER!**  
MAKING ROOM FOR A GIANT DIAMOND & JEWELRY  
**SUPERSTORE**

AT OUR S. CLEVELAND AVE. LOCATION

11500 S. CLEVELAND AVE. | 277-1011  
MONDAY-SATURDAY 9-9 & SUNDAY 9-8  
**STAYING OPEN!**  
(WILL BECOME OUR DIAMOND SUPERSTORE)

GULF COAST TOWN CENTER | 267-4547  
MONDAY-SATURDAY 9-9 & SUNDAY 10-8  
**CLOSING!**

BONITA SPRINGS, 1/2 MILE SOUTH OF COCONUT POINT OFF US 41 | 498-7994  
MONDAY-SATURDAY 9:30-6 & SUNDAY 12-6  
**CLOSING!**



1 ctw  
\$649



3 carat solitaire  
\$12,900



1 carat solitaire  
\$1999

G.O.B. REORGANIZATION SALE

[WWW.DUNKINSDIAMONDS.COM](http://WWW.DUNKINSDIAMONDS.COM)