

A D D R E S S

of Mark Venzke,
citizen of the City Of Gainesville, Florida,
to the Commissioners of the City Of Gainesville, Florida

during the early evening public comment period
at the regular meeting of the Gainesville City Commission

on Thursday, April 4, 2013
at about 7:00 p.m.

concerning

impaired driving and the fitness of Craig Lowe to serve as mayor

I am Mark Venzke of Gainesville.

Mister Chairman,

Your recent arrest on charges of driving under the influence with property damage and of careless driving has appropriately raised the issue of impaired driving in general and the issue of your fitness for public office in particular.

As I related from a number of authoritative entities during public comments at the last City Commission meeting:

An average drunk driver has driven drunk 80 times before first arrest.

(Centers for Disease Control. "Vital Signs: Alcohol-Impaired Driving Among Adults — United States, 2010." Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. October 4, 2011.)

One in three people will be involved in an alcohol-related crash in their lifetime.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "The Traffic Stop and You: Improving Communications between Citizens and Law Enforcement." National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, March 2001, DOT HS 809 212.

Almost every 90 seconds, a person is injured in a drunk driving crash.

Blincoe, Lawrence, et al. "The Economic Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes 2000." Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2002. NHTSA FARS data, 2011.

Every day in America, another 27 people die as a result of drunk driving crashes.
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration FARS data, 2012.

I raise the issue of impaired driving in general because I want to promote public safety and your arrest in particular because I want to promote informed voting. I do not raise them to be mean.

I want all drivers to drive only while sober. I want our men and women in our criminal-justice system—our law enforcement officers, our prosecutors, our judges, our parole officers and our intervention specialists—to know that we citizens who highly value public safety stand unwaveringly behind their efforts to stop impaired driving. I want you, Mister Chairman, to be responsible to the citizens of Gainesville.

Impaired driving is not a personal problem. It is a very public problem. People who drive while impaired are not due the privacy that we afford to people who have personal problems that do not affect the public. **DRUNK DRIVERS KILL PEOPLE.**

Further, people who abuse mind-altering substances function deficiently.

I appreciate sanctions that are good for the public, good for offenders and good for our criminal-justice system. I support the concept of “intervention programs” for offenders of various kinds that target effective measures to address offenders' problems to prevent future offenses.

However, I think that the provisions of the deferred prosecution agreement into which you entered with Prosecutor William Cervone are deficient. Two weeks of deprivation of your driver's license is too short a time for the severity of your offense, and substance abuse assessment that is optional will fail to identify an addiction if you have one and require you to treat it if you have one. Instead of veering into a ditch, you could well have veered into the path of an oncoming vehicle. **YOU COULD HAVE KILLED SOMEONE.**

A public office holder who would have an addiction would be unable to give his important work the quality of effort that he or she would otherwise be able to give to it. He or she would also be prone to engaging in distorted deliberations and to making imprudent decisions.

For citizens to cast an informed vote in the runoff election on April 16, they need to know whether you have an addiction to alcohol.

Will you, Mister Chairman, undergo addiction evaluation and make the results of such an evaluation public before the runoff election?

I yield the remainder of my time.

498 words

3.00 minutes (00:03:00) at 166 words per minute