

# The Delray Democrat

## Shelly Petrolia for Mayor<sup>1</sup> Mitch Katz for Seat 3

The Democratic Club of Delray Beach and the editorial board of The Delray Democrat endorse Shelly Petrolia for City Commission Seat 5 (Mayor) and Mitch Katz for Seat 3.

At the forefront of the issues in the election is whether any vestige of our Village by the Sea will remain or whether dark money and developers will finally succeed in turning Delray Beach into a City by the Sea. Shelly Petrolia and Mitch Katz voted against the iPic disaster, and Shelly has always taken a hard look at developers' promises. In so doing, she earned their enmity and our respect and support.

We believe that Shelly Petrolia has the experience and the judgment for the job and is deserving of a second term as mayor. In contrast, we believe that Tracy Caruso lacks the experience to be mayor, and we are extremely wary of her past political choices.

Mayor Petrolia was on the City Commission for 5 years before she ran for mayor. Caruso's flyers repeatedly refer to Petrolia as a "Career Politician." Caruso is not the first person to deride experience. Donald Trump boasted that he knew more than the career politicians and promised that he was the one to fix things. We know how well that worked out.

And that brings us to the elephant in the room, the fact that ***Caruso was a registered Republican until the day after she filed to run for mayor.*** She not only supported Donald Trump, but we've seen *pictures of Caruso posing with far-right conspiracy theorist Laura Loomer* at what appears to be an event promoting the latter's campaign. During a candidates' forum hosted by The Set Neighborhood Alliance, Caruso claimed that she was fooled by Trump, as were many other people. She may be right about that, but none of those other people are running for mayor.

Moreover, Donald Trump has been an unapologetic racist his entire life. Racism paved his path to the White House, and one would have to be blind, willfully ignorant, or almost impossibly naïve to miss that. The best that can be said about Caruso's support of Trump is that it demonstrated a shocking lack of judgment or perhaps a disturbing willingness to go along to get along.

The timing of her recantation also raises questions. She claims that she told attendees at the Set forum that the final straw was Trump's mishandling of COVID, but his incompetence was clear from the start. Caruso also did not change her affiliation to NPA until the day she filed to run. Her image was removed from the Trumpettes-USA website, but the Wayback Machine ([www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)) shows that page as she appeared on it in October 2020. Taken together, her shift to NPA seems motivated less by a change in heart and more by a decision to run for mayor.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Delray Democrat*, February 2021, p. 1.

We are also troubled by the fliers Progress for Delray Beach (one of more than a dozen-out-of-town PACs supporting Caruso) have produced and distributed on Caruso's behalf. A recent one promised that "Tracy will restore the funding and staffing to our police department that her opponent cut."

Caruso knows, and if not should know, that the "cuts" involved eliminating overtime pay for events that – in light of the pandemic – would not be occurring. She also knows or should know that Police Chief Javaro Sims said that public safety would not be affected. Finally, and ironically for a candidate who claims to be committed to ending division, Caruso knows or should know that the budgeted cuts were unanimously approved by the other Commissioners. Thus the attack on Petrolia is also an attack on the Commissioners with whom Caruso seeks to serve.

The same can be said of Caruso's flier holding Petrolia responsible for problems with Delray's drinking water. These problems were created long before Petrolia or any other current Commissioner sat on the dais and they were corrected soon after they came to light. The City's utility department tests the water daily and says that it is safe to drink, and we understand that no current Commissioner disputes that. It is hard to see this flier as anything but the fearmongering that Republican operatives from Lee Atwater to Karl Rove have done so well.

Some say that partisanship has no place in a nonpartisan race. The dozen or more out-of-town, conservative PACs supporting Caruso don't believe that, nor do we. Our country is just beginning to recover from the carnage that was Donald Trump, and even though Trump is out of office he looms so large that Republicans are still forced to parrot his Big Lies or face retribution.

The bottom line for us is that the people pouring money into the PACs supporting Tracy Caruso are likely large Republican donors and expect something in return. We don't want that to be Delray Beach.

### **Mitch Katz**

Our endorsement of Mitch Katz was also not taken lightly because many people with whom we usually agree are supporting Ryan Boylston, who was not a Trump supporter or a recent convert to NPA.

However, Mitch did a good job as Commissioner for three years and we feel that he deserves a chance to continue his work. We also feel that having a lifelong Democrat in that office means having someone we know shares our commitment to the Democratic Party platform. Also, since Tracy Caruso and Ryan Boylston seem to be a slate, we're going with Shelly Petrolia and Mitch Katz. The mayor should have someone who will work with her on the difficult issues facing Delray Beach.

Finally, and regarding one of the most difficult issues facing our Village by the Sea, it is always helpful to learn from what has transpired elsewhere. A friend of ours grew up in Boca Raton and Fort Lauderdale during the 70s and watched their transformations with dismay.

Lauderdale went from being the beautiful boating center of the world with sparkling nightlife to an overbuilt city with a distinctly worn and urban feel. Boca was an idyllic little pink town, with careful measures in place to maintain that charm. In time, sadly, those measures were deemed

unnecessary. The result is a massively overbuilt city with none of the serenity and charm it once possessed.

Delray Beach was indeed a Village by the Sea with a sandy, island vibe. It is a different place today. With development we have gained some things, but we stand on the verge of going too far and losing what we still possess. There is a reason that Southeast Florida residents have steadily migrated up the coast over the years. It is because they are searching for what once was in these towns. Let's not allow what remains of our lovely Village by the Sea to be carelessly bartered off to overdevelopment. Instead, let's preserve and cherish what we have right here.

We believe that the records of Shelly Petrolia and Mitch Katz establish that they are the candidates best suited to do so.