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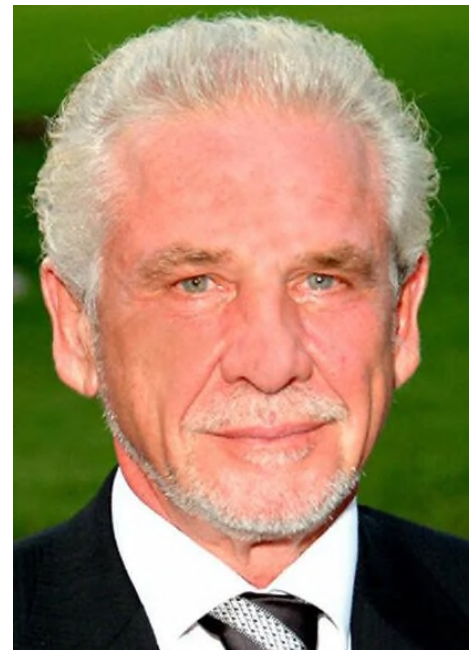
## Familiar face enters KCB Commission fray

By RICHARD TAMBORRINO Special to The Citizen  
Nov 9, 2023

For those who closely follow Monroe County politics or simply have a good memory, a familiar face is throwing his name into the mix to fill the open Key Colony Beach City Commission seat.

Mario Di Gennaro, who served on the Monroe County Commission from 2007-2010, has made public his intention to apply to fill the seat previously occupied by former KCB Mayor Patti Trefry, who abruptly resigned last month. Vice Mayor Beth Ramsay Vickery — now mayor pro tem — has assumed mayoral duties for the duration of Trefry’s term, which ends in November 2024.

Applicants for the open commission seat must be KCB residents and registered city voters, with the deadline for applications set for Thursday, Nov. 9. Then the commission has 45 days to agree on a new commissioner from the submitted applicants.



Di Gennaro

Di Gennaro has been a KCB resident since 1994 but has been absent from Monroe politics for well over a decade. He said by phone he’s “taking this seriously because it’s my home,” adding that the city “used to run like a Swiss clock,” but needs his experience now more than ever. He also said he’s been paying close attention to

all the unrest in the city of late, centered around the rebuilding of City Hall.

He admitted to having faced some health issues for the past two and a half years, but now that he is finally feeling well and seeing the challenges that face KCB, he believes the time is right to serve the community he's enjoyed for almost three decades.

The 76-year-old Di Gennaro touted his past accomplishments while serving as a Monroe County mayor and commissioner, including his support for the sinking of the Vandenberg artificial reef in May 2009, which has become one of the county's most popular wreck diving destinations. Di Gennaro also said he played a key role in securing close to \$200 million for Monroe County wastewater improvements and was instrumental in the expansion of Key West International Airport.

Di Gennaro believes his business and government experience, along with relationships he maintains today in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C., will serve KCB well.

He admits he's not personally familiar with all the city's issues but said "my beautiful little city is a mess," referring to how "the commissioners are so divided, and they're not communicating."

"There's enough partisanship in Washington, D.C., and the public is extremely unhappy with elected officials today," he added. "We are servants of the public, and I can bring Key Colony back to where it used to be and get everything under control."

Di Gennaro was clear on one item, saying if he was to join the commission, his idea would be to put the City Hall rebuild up for referendum and "let the people decide, since it's their money."

“We do not need a Taj Mahal,” he said about the city hall issue. “We need a comfortable place to conduct city business.”

So far, Di Gennaro appears to be among a group of a half-dozen applicants believed to have either formally applied or are expected to do so by next week’s deadline.

KCB is faced with a prolonged process for filling the open commission seat, with the city hall issue at the center. Di Gennaro’s stance on the referendum vote may not make his candidacy appealing to Ramsay Vickery and Commissioner Tom Harding, who support the complete rebuild of City Hall. Commissioners Freddie Foster and Joey Raspe are opposed to a new City Hall.

If the commission cannot agree on an applicant within 45 days of the Nov. 9 deadline, the city then has six months in which to conduct a special election. Many anticipate there to be a special vote to fill the seat in March 2024 because of a likely expected impasse.

In Section 2-64 of the KCB charter, it states that when the office of a commissioner becomes vacant upon resignation, the vacancy would be filled by a majority vote of the remaining commission members. However, if no candidate is agreed upon by the remaining commissioners within 45 days, the city commission would call a special election.

However, there are varying interpretations among community leaders about whether an alternative approach, such as designating City Clerk Silvia Gransee to break the tie, would be an option.

Marathon experienced a similar situation in January 2022, when newly elected Trevor Wofsey resigned after less than three months. Robyn Still was selected to replace Wofsey during an awkwardly conducted coin flip, which is how that city’s

charter mandated such a solution, after council consensus could not be reached.

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