

Palm Beach Post Editorial Board endorses candidates for Juno Beach mayor, council

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Juno Beach residents will vote for a mayor for the first time, one of two contested posts on the March 19 ballot.

For mayor, The Post Editorial Board endorses Alexander Cooke. As his replacement in Seat 5, The Post endorses Diana Davis.

While incumbent DD Halpern is returning in Seat 4 without opposition, the board is undergoing shakeup with newcomer Jacob Rosengarten elected without opposition in Seat 3.

Rosengarten will fill the seat held by council member Peggy Wheeler, who is leaving to run against Cooke for mayor. The seat held by Elaine Cotronakis will be replaced by the new mayor.

For Seat 5, Diana Davis

Davis, 62, a 20-year resident, is winding down her law practice, Legacy Matters, which focused on elder law. She is a former corporate counsel for Florida Power & Light and is chair of the Juno Beach Planning & Zoning Board.

She vows to protect the town from overdevelopment and to fight for local control over land use decisions, rather than state control.

Her opponent, Dean Anthon, did not meet with the Editorial Board.

For mayor, Alexander Cooke

Cooke, 46, is CEO of wealth manager Optimist Capital and has been on the council for two years. He positions himself as a supporter of slow growth, saying he helped take steps to prevent another intense development like the 95-unit Caretta project under construction now at U.S. 1 and Donald Ross Road.

He says his opponent, Wheeler, who has been on the council for seven years, “fought to get the code to allow it (Caretta) to be built.”

The code change allowed 95 percent of the project to be devoted to residential development instead of 75 percent as in the past. Cooke says he pushed to revert the rule back to 80 percent.

Cooke also says he led the charge to get a \$500,000 contribution toward a police station from the Chicago-based Caretta developer, JDL.

On the controversial fight over replacing the playground equipment at Kagan Park, Cooke has recused himself because his wife led a foundation that raised money to pay for the improvements, money rejected by the council.

However, he adamantly rejects hiring the same contractor that he says did a poor job replacing equipment at the park previously. "You don't hire the same group that just screwed up your bathroom to build your house," Cooke said.

Wheeler did not meet with the Editorial Board, so the paper is not in a position to recommend her for the seat.