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Supere Candidates Agree to COPA Agenda

Candidates for county supervisor overwhelmingly support nonprofit's election season campaign

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by Jacob Pierce on May 01, 2012

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Jim Lapp, pastor for St. Stevens Lutheran Church in Santa Cruz, says politically active nonprofit COPA is an important and powerful organization. "And are we powerful because we have a lot wealth and influence?" Lapp asked the crowd at a COPA election season event April 30.

"No!" audience members yelled, many of them shaking water bottle maracas filled with coffee beans. It is COPA's numbers and worthy causes, leaders explained, that give the group strength.

The Monday night scene, at the Temple Beth El multipurpose room, was COPA's county supervisor candidate accountability session. COPA, which stands for Communities Organized for Regional Power in Action, held the event to see if Santa Cruz's District 1 and 2 supervisor candidates would agree to the nonpartisan group's list of important issues for the 2012 election season.

The candidates overwhelmingly supported COPA's Stand Up and Take Charge Agenda, which outlines recommendations in housing, community health, safety, education, immigration and economic opportunity.

COPA asked candidates three questions: Will you work with COPA on the Stand Up and Take Charge Agenda? If elected, will you meet with COPA within 45 days of taking office? And will you come to COPA's Regional Accountability Session in October?

The questions received "yes" answers from all six candidates, with the exception of Gary Arnold, a District 1 candidate (whose website recently posted a confusing article titled "COPA... The Lucifer Connection"). Arnold answered "maybe" to the first question and "yes" to the others.

District 2 candidate Zach Friend committed to the agreements, including the accountability session, which falls on his parents' 40th wedding anniversary, on the stipulation that COPA "will commit to calling my mom and explaining to her why I'm not [at her party]."

District 1 incumbent John Leopold and candidate Charles Paulden were also in attendance, as were District 2 candidates Rich McInnis and Antonio Rivas—all of them agreeing to the agenda.

COPA's campaign covers a range of topics, including initiatives to streamline permitting and zoning practices and a buy-local preference policy for public agencies. The campaign also embraces proposed youth recreation centers and seeks to ensure every foreclosure would go through mediation with banks before being finalized.

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