

Metro

Backers shelve county mayor

Lack of signatures delays effort until 2012 ballot.

By CHRISTIAN M. WADE
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TAMPA » The campaign to replace Hillsborough County's appointed administrator with an elected county mayor is over, at least for the next two years.

With about 27,000 petition signatures needed and the deadline only four days away, the drive to get the issue on November's ballot is dead, the group's chair said Monday.

"We aren't going to make it this time," said Tampa lawyer

Mary Ann Stiles. "We just didn't have enough money or volunteers."

Stiles said her group will not give up, however. She vowed to try again in 2012.

"We are not going away," she said. "We've invested too much on this initiative."

Over the weekend, Stiles reached out to supporters with a final plea for more signatures and money to pay outstanding debts the committee has raked up over the past year.



Stiles

more than \$14,000.

Stiles' group failed to gather enough signatures in 2006, but were successful in 2008, only the proposed referendum was knocked off the ballot after a court challenge over an incorrect date on the petition residents signed.

Figures from the county elections office show the group collected about \$12,000 from April 1 to July 16, the most recent fundraising period, but spent

The signatures for the 2008 initiative were no longer valid, so petitioners had to start over again.

In April, Stiles and other supporters went before county commissioners and asked them to put the issue on the ballot, but the board declined. The county's 14-member charter review board can also put it on the ballot, but board members also have declined.

Stiles' group hired a New Port Richey-based marketing firm in May to help with collecting signatures for the county mayor referendum, but that effort

proved too little, too late.

Meanwhile, voters will be asked to repeal a charter amendment giving veto powers for the county mayor, if the position is ever created.

Voters approved the measure in 2008, but the charter review board, arguing that the provision is confusing and possibly even unconstitutional, decided to put a referendum on November's ballot repealing it.

Reporter Christian M. Wade can be reached at (813) 259-7679

*Submitted with the "Record" 7/30/2010
By: Gerald S. White, Jr., Hillsborough County
Charter Review Board*

Effort to get Hillsborough mayor on ballot falters

Only a quarter of the required signatures from registered voters have been collected.

BY BILL VARIAN
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — The leader of an effort to create an elected Hillsborough County mayor acknowledged Tuesday it will take a miracle to get the question on this year's ballot.

"But I believe in miracles," said Mary Ann Stiles, refusing to acknowledge defeat.

Stiles and the group Elected County Mayor Political Committee Inc. had four months to collect roughly 41,000 petition signatures from registered voters to get the question on

the November ballot. With the deadline looming Friday, Stiles said the group has managed to collect just 12,500.

She said she doesn't know how many petitions volunteers may have collected but not turned in to her.

Her refusal to cry uncle may reflect a desire to continue collecting donations to the cause to offset what she has spent paying professional signature gatherers.

Stiles has tried through three election cycles to get the question on the ballot, arguing that

the current commission and appointed administrator form of government is outdated.

She has argued the need for a single elected official, accountable to the public, who can set an agenda on important issues such as improving the county's transportation system.

She and her family have spent tens of thousands of dollars, largely to pay people to collect signatures, but have failed to attract broader financial support for the undertaking.

The first drive was thwarted when it came a few signatures

short of the number needed to make it on the ballot, though Stiles said a botched count by then-elections supervisor Buddy Johnson was to blame.

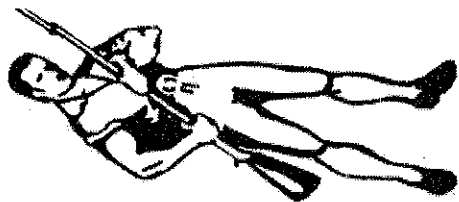
A citizen successfully challenged the ballot language on the second try.

With the economy ailing, raising money to collect signatures this go around proved particularly difficult.

"I will be back," Stiles said. "I'm not going away."

Bill Varian can be reached at (813) 226-3387 or varian@sptimes.com.

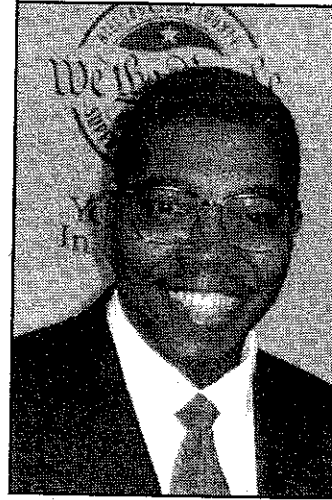
SENTINEL



Petition For County Mayor Fails

According to Hillsborough County Charter Review Board member, **Gerald White**, the petition for County Mayor initiated by **Mary Ann Stiles** has failed to get the appropriate amount of signatures to make the ballot.

"I think this is a victory for the African American citizens of Tampa. The four African Americans on the



GERALD WHITE

hasn't given up.

"She's gone on record saying she won't give up, and we'll do our best as advocates for all citizens of the county.

"We will be voting on the internal auditors position, either to remove the post or have it changed. My concern is the post could be used for political purposes. More than \$2.8 million has been spent since the position was created 6 years ago, and only 5 audits have been done."

White said if **Stiles** had been successful, he's sure counter-measures would have come into play.

"I still feel a County Chairperson should be elected by the voters and given limited power. I wouldn't change the title to County Mayor, because that would give people the wrong impression."

Reporter Leon B. Crews can be reached at (813) 248-0724, or e-mailed at lcrews@flsentinel.com

Charter Review Board made an adequate case to the voters and to have the veto measure removed from the ballot. That would have had an adverse affect on minority voters."

White said they need everyone to stay focused and vote to remove the veto measure from the Charter when it appears on the ballot in November.

As far as the bid for County Mayor is concerned, **White** said he's sure **Stiles**

TAMPA BAY

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★ ★ Wednesday, June 30, 2010 | 3B

County mayor petition drive stalls

As a deadline looms, backers have only a quarter of needed names.

BY BILL VARIAN
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — The effort to create an elected mayor for Hillsborough County government is on the ropes.

The leader of that effort acknowledged Tuesday that her group has collected only about 10,000 petition signatures over the past several months. That's less than a quarter of the number needed, assuming some signatures will be ruled invalid, with only a month remaining to meet a deadline to get the question on the November ballot.

Mary Ann Stiles, who heads the Elected County Mayor Political Committee, said the group

has not been able to raise the money needed to pay enough people to collect signatures.

"It's going to be hard," Stiles said. "We don't have the money to get all the signatures we need."

Stiles' comments came after she appeared before the county's Charter Review Board. The 14-member board, appointed by county commissioners, could save her the effort of collecting voter signatures by putting the question on the ballot itself.

Instead, the board is considering whether to strip language from the charter that was passed by voters two years ago that would give an elected mayor veto power over commis-

sion decisions should the post get created.

Supporters of an elected mayor previously collected signatures needed to ask voters whether to create the post. Because the state constitution requires such ballot initiatives to involve only a single subject, they pursued the veto question separately.

But the mayoral ballot question was removed from the ballot after it was challenged in court, leaving the veto question on its own. It passed.

Some charter board members claim that leaving veto power in the charter is confusing.

» See CHARTER, 10B

Stiles argued that leaving the veto power in the charter does no harm and that, by proposing to eliminate it, the review panel is hampering her efforts to collect signatures.

"I don't understand why they don't understand that the public is confused," Stiles said.

The charter board did agree to consider letting voters decide whether to modify the veto language instead of killing it altogether. Separately, board members agreed to consider letting voters modify the duties and title of the county's internal performance auditor instead of eliminating that post, as is also being considered.

A final public hearing on the veto and auditor questions is scheduled for July 13.

Bill Varian can be reached at varian@sptimes.com or (813) 226-3387.

County Mayor Defeated Once Again

Whatever the prognosis of Hillsborough County's County Mayor concept, the thing and all its glory has been put back in the freezer, packed with ice and wrapped for safe-keeping until 2012.

We would like to send condolences to the supporters of a County Mayor concept. However, we are not used to being hypocritical. So, the best we can say is major supporter and local lawyer Mary Stiles did, indeed, fight a noble battle to "keep hope alive," so to speak. Time and again, she would remind anyone who would listen, that the Hillsborough County voters clamored for an opportunity to let the world know how they felt about having a County mayor.

However, at the eleventh-hour, when indications were overwhelming that county mayor supporters would not get petition signatures needed, someone threw in the towel.

Will they return? You can bet supporters will be back. But as for now, Hillsborough County continues to be stuck with its current kind of government. What type of government might that be? We call it a democratic government with all its zits, foibles and representative consensus.

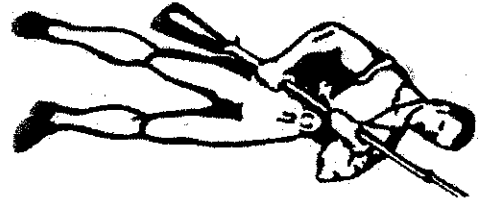
Extra County Commission Seats For Whom?

If you can get there, the Hillsborough County Charter Review Board is holding a public hearing, Friday at 9AM, on whether to expand the number of County Commission seats from seven to nine.

It seems, the suggestion to expand the number of County seats was the idea of a prominent member of the Hispanic community, citing the supposed fact that no Hispanic had ever served on Hillsborough County Commission (Sylvia Rodriguez Kimble excepted). Therefore, increasing the number of commissioners would supposedly bring about a district with a large enough number of Latinos voters to insure election of someone with Hispanic heritage.

The Latino community is and shall continue to be our friend and ally in all things progressive and political. So, we initially understood and supported Hispanic efforts to add extra county seats in order to elect someone of Hispanic heritage. But when we were informed the late County Commissioner Sylvia Rodriguez Kimbell did not qualify because she was not simply Hispanic, but was Black, we were forced to fall back on a time-worn Spanish-language question, "?Y tu abuela, donde esta?" Translated, it means, "And your grandmother, where did she come from (what color was she)?" Most often, the answers are "My grandmother comes from Africa. She is Black!"

Thus, until the Hispanic community can decide who is and who is not Latin Hispanic (based on skin-color), we say, "Leave the number of County Commission seats at their present number of seven." We mean no disrespect. But what we crave is clarification.



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52 PAGES

75¢

Celebrating 65 Years In The Tampa Bay Area

NEWS & VIEWS



REBECCA WAINRIGHT

"SOMEBODY'S GOT TO STAND UP": Mary Ann Stiles outside a recent contentious hearing before the Charter Review Board

A long strange trip

Mary Ann Stiles' quixotic crusade to change county government.

POLITICS

By Mitch Perry

Last month, after a painfully drawn-out process, the Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners — in a sort of slow-mo version of the reality show *Survivor* — voted to boot Administrator Pat Bean off the island that is county government. The 64-year-old Bean had alienated board members, as well as members of the public, after it was revealed she awarded raises to herself and key advisors at the same time the county was laying off workers. A reported Florida Department of Law Enforcement investigation continues amid claims of her snooping through staffer e-mails.

If Tampa attorney Mary Ann Stiles had her way, there wouldn't be a Pat Bean serving at the behest of commissioners. As leader of the group Taking Back Hillsborough County, Stiles supports a plan to have a strong mayor run the county, a person who would be accountable to the voters, not the seven men and women of the Board.

Tampa Republican political consultant Mark Proctor says he's firmly convinced that an

alternative to business as usual is needed at the County Center, and uses the Bean case as lead evidence for it. "Instead of the BOCC hiring someone and giving them virtual guaranteed job security because of the cost of getting rid of them, the voters would vote for someone who would be paid a salary to perform their job or be removed by the voters without a big bailout package."

After four and a half years and two failed attempts (in 2006 and 2008) to get the county-mayor measure on the ballot, Mary Ann Stiles' bid is on life support.

Over the past decade, as the BOCC went further right, liberals grew more agitated never more so than in 2005 when the board, led by Ronda Storms, voted 6-1 to ban the county government from so much as acknowledging gay pride.

The move stunned a significant segment of the public. Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio repudiated

the vote in a *Tampa Tribune* story whose headline read "Mayor: Gays Deserve Respect," and 1,000 people protested the commissioners' stance the following month on a stultifyingly hot and humid Sunday afternoon.

Later that year, the Commission — led by transit critics Storms and Brian Blair — hired a former whistleblower at the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Agency named John Dausman (aka HARI, then Hartline) to lead a management study of the organization.

HARI advocates smelled a rat, and the move led Stiles to quit lobbying for the agency. The esteemed attorney — and Republican — then got seriously active, forming a committee to study changing the county's form of governance. She then announced her campaign to give county voters the chance to vote for a strong mayor, a move that several of the state's biggest counties, such as Duval (Jacksonville), Orange (Orlando) and Miami-Dade, already enjoy.

Now, after four and a half years and two failed attempts (in 2006 and 2008) to get it on the ballot, the bid is on life support.

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From p.5

IN AN INTERVIEW with CL at her South Tampa law offices last week, Stiles nursed a Coca-Cola and answered succinctly when asked how the campaign is going as the July 31 deadline approaches.

"I'm far behind," she confesses. "We need about 30,000 signatures." Stiles cites a variety of reasons for the effort being stalled, such as the fact that the county's Charter Review Board is attempting to repeal a second part of the measure that actually *did* get on the ballot — and was approved by voters — in 2008.

"People are going. I don't understand what you're doing, why do you still need money if they're trying to take it off the ballot?"

But Stiles says that if she can't qualify by the end of July, she is not giving up what has become a big part of her life over the last five years.

"I am convinced that we need some change in government in Hillsborough County from what we have, an appointed administrator."

Stiles and other supporters thought they would have the chance to vote on the issue back in 2006. But Supervisor of Elections Buddy Johnson said the effort had come up approximately 3,000 thousand signatures short.

Stiles protested his count, and Johnson later did a recount of 14,000 signatures. His action came too late for the measure to make it onto that year's election ballot, but he said there *were* enough to qualify the measure for the 2008 election.

But instead of voters getting the chance to vote on it then, a Democratic Party activist named James Shirk filed a lawsuit in 2008, claiming the language in the initiative wasn't clear. Several courts agreed with him, saying essentially that the measure was created for the 2006 ballot, not 2008's. However, the second portion of the measure, that would grant the county mayor veto power over ordinances and part of the budget, stayed on the ballot, and voters approved it, demonstrating that the electorate was probably in support of changing the form of government from that of a county administrator to a strong mayor.

But the window is closing for a 2010 vote, and some feel maybe forever. Tampa City Councilwoman Mary Mulhern says she's had ambivalent feelings about the measure, but believes the momentum for it has dissipated over the years. "I don't think they'll get the signatures. The political will is not there."

BUT OTHERS IN the county believe that after the Pat Bean debacle, such a measure is needed more than ever.

The problem, some supporters say, is that it's hard to locate quantifiable data indicating that Miami Dade or Orange runs more efficiently than a county that doesn't have a strong mayor, like Hillsborough or Pinellas.

Advocates say the fact that Orlando has three high-speed rail spots is indicative of the strength of their local government, but again, that's hard to judge.

Andy Steingold is the mayor of Safety Harbor and a member of the Pinellas County Charter Review Commission. In April he was on the losing side of a proposal that would have asked Pinellas

voters to create a strong mayor form of government this fall.

Steingold's argument is that every other form of government — federal, state and cities — all have executives. Why not the county?

"You've got a strong mayor in St. Petersburg [Bill Foster], and he's a point person with the Rays and large corporations, and he's trying to encourage businesses to bring them to the city," Steingold says. With 24 local governments inside Pinellas, he says leadership is required. "When you have a board of county commissioners, it's the county administrator who is the point person. But that person serves at the whim of those members, and has to answer to them."

Pinellas County Commissioner Karen Seel doesn't see much value in changing the form of local government in Pinellas, telling CL that she personally likes the status quo. In the 11 years she's served on the board, she's never felt the need to change what isn't broken.

Hillsborough activist (and CL contributor) George Niemann is a major critic of what goes

"Nobody wants to take this on," says Stiles. "I call it the circle of fear. But this county has not moved forward. I can understand why normal citizens don't get involved, because you get accused of all kinds of reasons."

on down at the county center. He confesses to ambivalence about the county mayor position, particularly in the wake of the Bean situation. But he ultimately comes down against the measure, saying that the election of a county mayor "becomes yet another political race which will give advantage to whomever has the most campaign money and political machine to work with."

One criticism is that a poor county mayor could actually make things worse. Stiles acknowledges that charge as valid.

LAST MONTH, Stiles went before the Hillsborough Charter Review Board to maintain that the measure approving veto power for a county mayor should stay in the charter. It wasn't a happy occasion for her.

Stiles said that she felt verbally abused after the session during which black Democratic activist

Gerald White called her out for not appearing in the "hood" to discuss the measure. Some blacks have expressed fears about a county mayor, saying it would dilute what little voting power they have in the county.

Stiles calls that criticism "totally unfair" and says that the 2008 measure on veto power won a majority in African-American voting precincts in Hillsborough. "I think his problem is I haven't sat down with him," she says of White.

But there's no doubt that she feels a bit weary. With her successful and busy career as an attorney (she lobbied for nearly 30 years for one of the most powerful companies in Florida, Associated Industries), she seems to be hedging her bets on how much more work she wants to put into this crusade.

She confesses to having already spent \$200,000 of her own money on the issue over the years. But as a self-described political animal who ran back in 1986 for the state House (and lost badly), she says despite what happens in the next month, she won't throw in the towel.

"I'm so tired of the fear that encircles our

county government, that they won't step out of the box," she says, though she does give props to fellow Republican Mark Sharpe for doing so.

"Nobody wants to take this on. I call it the circle of fear. But this county has not moved forward. I can understand why normal citizens don't get involved, because you get accused of all kinds of reasons."

But Mary Ann Stiles insists she won't give up the ghost.

"Somebody's got to stand up in this county and say, 'This is wrong.'"

A public hearing on the proposed repeal of the county-mayor veto measure will go back before the charter review board in Tampa on July 13 at 6 p.m. at the Fred B. Karl County Center. Readers can sign a petition supporting the county mayor measure by going to countymayor.org.



FLORIDA

SENTINEL

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75¢



Public Hearings To Discuss the Position of the Internal Performance Auditor and Number of County Commissioner Districts

The Hillsborough County Charter Review Board will hold three public hearings to discuss two issues:

- 1) Renaming the Internal Performance Auditor position to Internal Auditor and deleting (in the job description) reference to budget analyst, establishing an audit committee, and requiring Board direction annually on the conduct of internal audits.
- 2) Increasing the number of single-member districts from four to five, and increasing the number of at-large districts from three to four.

Residents are encouraged to attend these public hearings to provide their input regarding these issues. All public hearings will be held at:

County Center, 2nd Floor Boardroom
601 E. Kennedy Blvd., Tampa, FL 33602

The public hearing regarding the position of the Internal Performance Auditor will be held:

- **Friday, July 30, 9 a.m.**

The public hearings regarding the number of County Commissioner Districts will be held:

- **Monday, August 2, 6 p.m.**
- **Thursday, August 12, 6 p.m.**

The 2010-2011 Charter Review Board is conducting a study of all phases of Hillsborough County government. Changes to the Home Rule Charter would go before voters for approval in November 2010 and/or November 2012. All meetings and public hearings are televised by Hillsborough Television (www.hiv22.org)

For more information about the Charter Review Board or these public hearing issues, visit www.hillsboroughcounty.org/charterreviewboard

All meeting facilities are ADA compliant. Any additional, necessary accommodations will be provided with a 48-hour notice.

For more information, contact
Hillsborough County Public Affairs
County Center, 26th Floor
601 E. Kennedy Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33602
813-272-5890 (TTY: 813-301-7173)

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY
Board of County Commissioners

TAMPA TRIBUNE

and The Tampa Times

[metro]



Public Hearings

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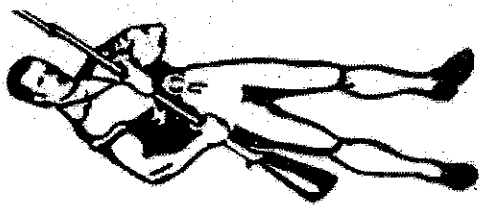
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HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY
Board of County Commissioners
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75¢

Public Hearings Held By Charter Review Board

Members of the Hillsborough County Charter Review Board will have three meetings to discuss issues of concern to the community. The meetings will be held at the County Center, 2nd Floor Boardroom, 601 E. Kennedy Blvd.

On Friday, July 30th, the board will discuss the position of changing the name of the Internal Performance Auditor. The meeting will be

held at 9 a.m.

The second topic of interest is to increase the number of single-member and at-large districts. This would increase the size of the Hillsborough County Board of Commissioners from its current 7-member board to a 9-member board.

On Monday, August 2nd, and Thursday, August 12th, at 6 p.m., the public hearings will focus on the num-

ber of County Commissioner Districts.

Any changes to the Hillsborough County Home Rule Charter would go before voters for approval in November 2010 or November 2012. All meetings and public hearings are televised by Hillsborough Television, which airs on Channel 622 on Bright House, and Channel 22 on Verizon FiOS and Comcast Cable.

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*** Monday, July 26, 2010 | 1B



ERNEST HOOPER

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Look for the Hillsborough County Charter Review Board to discuss altering the ordinance banning discrimination so it includes sexual orientation among the protected categories. For so many reasons, it's a change that needs to be made. ...

Florida Sentinel Bulletin

75¢

24 PAGES

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Charter Review Board Wants Public Comment On County Auditor And County Mayor Issues



FRANK REDDICK



JAMES TOKLEY



GERALD WHITE



JOSEPH ROBINSON

The 2010-2011 Hillsborough County Charter Review Board is holding two public hearings to receive public comment on two proposed changes to the Hillsborough County Home Rule Charter:

- Eliminate the position and functions of the County Internal Performance Auditor
- Repeal the provision that enumerates the veto powers of an elected county mayor

These two public hearings will be held at 6 p.m. in the 2nd Floor Boardroom of County Center, 601 E. Kennedy Blvd, Tampa on:

- Tuesday, June 29
- Tuesday, July 13

The Resolution to eliminate the IPA position can be reviewed at: www.hillsboroughcounty.org/charterre-

[viewboard/2010/IPAResolution.pdf](#)

The Resolution regarding the veto power of the County Mayor is being revised and will be posted on the Charter Review Web site.

The 2010-2011 Hillsborough County Charter Review Board has been meeting in 2010 to conduct a comprehensive study of all phases of County government. Any changes to the Hillsborough County Home Rule Charter would go before voters for approval in November 2010 and/or November 2012. All meetings and public hearings are televised by Hillsborough

Television, seen on Bright House channel 622 or Verizon FiOS or Comcast Cable channel 22

Direct access to the Charter Review Board is available by visiting www.hillsboroughcounty.org.