

Farrington looks forward to continuing efforts, taking on new challenges

Contributed by Elizabeth Larson
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LAKEPORT – There are many things Anthony Farrington says he still wants to do for Lake County, so he's on the ballot again this year as he seeks a third term as District 4's supervisor. {sidebar id=82}

First elected in 2000 at age 30, Farrington is closing in on the end of his second term.

As he seeks reelection this year on the June 3 ballot, Farrington is in the enviable position of having no challenger running against him.

That's a far different scenario than he faced four years ago, when he had three people seeking his seat. Yet he managed to take victory in the primary despite a sizable field.

His reelection bid this year may turn out to be one of the easier moments for the 38-year-old Farrington over this past year.

Last September he was seriously injured on Cow Mountain when the dirt bike he was riding collided with a pickup truck. He later had to undergo surgery to repair his fractured right shoulder, and missed a month's worth of board meetings while he recuperated.

Then he weathered the terminal illness of his mother, Delores Bain.

After her death on March 2, Farrington took some time away from meetings, and returned, appearing older, more grave. His demeanor in the months since has seemed markedly more thoughtful and introspective.

Ask him about his family, and he's poignantly silent for a time. Then he talks about his mother and her family, and how they came from Illinois in the 1850s, settling in Lake County. He's proud of his pioneer heritage, and believes he has a responsibility to maintain the quality of life that drew his ancestors here so long ago.

Setting priorities for the road ahead

With his reelection in June an almost foregone conclusion, Farrington is looking past campaigning and refocusing on the issues he sees as important, which he says are many.

He said it's hard to distill all of his interests down to a few priorities. Yet, when he does start listing them water comes up on top, specifically the ongoing negotiations between the county and Yolo County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, which has as its primary source the waters of Clear Lake.

This past year, Farrington said the Board of Supervisors approved a committee to negotiate a memorandum of understanding with Yolo Flood, and amend an existing agreement between Yolo Flood and Lake County Special Districts, which he said would provide 8,000 acre feet of water on Clear Lake.

He's also working to launch the Lake County Meth Project, an education and awareness program that targets Lake County youth from the ages of 12 through 18. The project's goal is to educate young people about the dangers and consequences of using methamphetamine.

Then, there is the county's antiquated infrastructure, another obvious priority, said Farrington.

The challenge, he said, will be rebuilding the infrastructure without hitting ratepayers too hard. He sees part of the solution as requiring developers to invest in infrastructure expansion.

In District Four, Farrington said the Kelseyville and Finley water systems already have been upgraded. He said he'll continue supporting the county's efforts to expand the north Lakeport water treatment facility, make repairs to the north Lakeport sewer collection system and provide sewer to Lampson Airport.

There also are efforts under way to reconstruct Soda Bay Road and S. Main Street and underground utility lines at a cost of \$6 million, as well as finishing to Gaddy Lane, he said.

Farrington is hopeful that the county also will be able to establish its own Court Appointed Special Advocate program – known as CASA – which is a nonprofit advocacy group that works for abused children in the court system.

He said the county secured a \$10,000 grant to assist in the planing phase. However, they've received news that the state is looking at cutting future fundings for new CASA programs. Farrington said the county may reach out to Sonoma County to seek an interim partnership to get started.

Looking ahead, Farrington said he's anticipating the adoption of the county's new General Plan, which has been several years in the making.

He said he's also concerned that the North Lakeport Area Plan be updated as soon as possible to be ready for future growth. “That document, in itself, is severely flawed.”

That's because the plan has several areas of inappropriate zoning, most notably, zoning for high-density residential on the area's unstable, serpentine-filled hillsides, he said.

Across the highway, there is the issue of suburban reserve and agricultural zoning abutting residential, and he pointed to Mark Mitchell's Eachus View Estates proposal – rezoning agricultural lands to build several homes – as being a classic example of the zoning conflicts at work there.

Why he's running again

After nearly eight years on the board, Farrington said interaction with his constituents has been very rewarding, and guided him in his decision to seek another term.

“What I'm most proud about is just the relationships I've developed with my constituents and the success that I've had with them on an individual basis in terms of providing them with solutions,” he said.

It's those small victories — helping people through the maze of government and earning their trust — that don't make the headlines, he explained. “That is what continues to fuel me in terms of wanting to continue to serve.”

He said he was hesitant at times to run again, but through urging of constituents — as well as the advice of county Chief Administrative Officer Kelly Cox — Farrington committed to run.

“I always felt that public service was a noble calling and one person can make a difference,” he said.

While he still believes that, he said his time in office has shown him that making a difference can often be an uphill battle, thanks to a largely dysfunctional government, particularly at the state level.

He said it's no wonder that many people are jaded and cynical about government. “The process has squeezed out many people and everyday citizens.”

The county itself, he explained, has its own battles with the state, especially now in light of the fiscal crisis, with Farrington adding that the county likely will feel the impacts. “It's probably going to be one of the worst years we've seen.”

Future plans still forming

This July, Farrington will start back to law school after taking a sabbatical earlier this year to be with his mother during her illness.

It's his final year in the program, and once he's finished with law school he said it will be time to decide if he'll sit for the bar exam. He said he took the course of study, in part, because he felt it would add to his ability to serve the county. While a lengthy and costly process, he said he's been a good investment.

Beyond that, Farrington, said he's not certain of the future, or what he might do when — in four years, at the grand age of 42 — his next term ends.

There has been speculation for years that he has his eye on a seat in the state Legislature and in political arenas beyond that.

Farrington himself said that when he was first elected, way back at age 30, many people said he was only going to serve one term and use it as a springboard elsewhere.

It hasn't been the case so far, although Farrington didn't outright rule out the possibility of seeking higher office. “For whatever reason, I've been getting asked this question a lot more,” he said.

However, he says he's disappointed with state and federal politics, where special interests rule. He's seen firsthand the problems with the state government's struggle to balance its own budget, which has directly impacted counties like Lake, who increasingly are being called on to solve problems they didn't create.

Farrington said there's still more to do here in Lake County, and said he wants to focus on his third term. Considering a run for a higher office will come down the road.

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