

Jan Gardner — Frederick County's first county executive

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Jan Gardner will be Frederick County's first elected county executive. It doesn't really matter which Republican runs against her, they will lose. It doesn't even matter if the Republican candidate has over half a million dollars in a campaign account (predicted by this columnist), that candidate will lose — even if that candidate has a radio program staffed with acolytes singing his praises 15 hours a week during the campaign.

No amount of glossy advertisements or events of self-promotion or Letters to the Editor will change the equation ... or outcome. Frederick County is fairly evenly divided in voter registrations so it will not be a coronation. Nevertheless, I expect she will win by at least 4 percent of the ballots cast.

Jan Gardner is a sharp lady and she has my respect. For observers who follow local government closely, they will remember she and I did not agree much on matters of illegal immigration, Board of Education spending, fiscal restraint in general and other issues, including the need to sell Citizens Care and Rehabilitation and Montevue Assisted Living. Nevertheless, she has earned my respect for her work ethic and for her knowledge level. Jan also has the respect of state officials. And like it or not, that is important.

The current Board of County Commissioners has done an admirable job confronting the fiscal challenges of the county. Their style has been brusque, and a by-product of their collective demeanor is a deep distrust of and antipathy toward hard-working county employees and, by extension, their families. These 2,000 employees and their families will remember times when they had a friendlier advocate walking the corridors of Winchester Hall.

This board has also been unrepentant in their pro-developer agenda. Jefferson Tech Park will end up costing county taxpayers up to \$100 million, and new approvals for developments in Monrovia and New Market will hurt the Republican candidate if that candidate is a current commissioner.

In a crowded field of candidates, votes from certain blocs can be diluted and therefore less effective. When those votes can be focused on one candidate, like a laser beam, they can be extremely effective. Land-use attorneys and developers would be thrilled with anybody on the current BoCC not named Gray. Their money will not be effective in convincing voters they haven't really seen what they've seen from the current board, such as the gutting of the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance. Folks handing out paper apples on Election Day will have the zeal of global warming propagandists — vote for Jan or we'll all die.

This BoCC was hellbent on giving us charter government. I'm sure more than one of the five Republicans envisioned themselves in the historic role of Frederick County's first elected county executive. Whether they are the candidate or a fan of the candidate, they will be disappointed.

I finish this column with the beginning of my column — Jan Gardner will be Frederick County's first county executive and let me be the first to congratulate her.

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