



## 2020 Candidate Questionnaire

**Submitted by:**

**Email: Richard Blonna**

**Phone: 908 334 2543 (cell)**

**Date: 9/14/20**

About you:

1. How old are you?

69 years old

2. In what part of Collier County do you live?

Marco Island

3. How long have you lived in Collier County, and where were you living previously?

I've lived full-time for nine years on Marco Island. Before that I lived in NJ for 60.

4. What is your educational background and past work experiences?

### **My Background, Education, and Experience**

I was born in Newark NJ in 1951 to two first-generation, blue-collar, Italian-American parents. I have one brother who is two years older than me. I went to public school in Newark and graduated from Vailsburg HS in 1968. My parents didn't have any money for me to go to college so I worked my way through college, paying for my undergraduate, Masters and Doctoral degrees.

I started out at Essex County College (ECC) in Newark NJ as a Physical Education Major. I attended ECC for two years before transferring to William Paterson University.

I met my wife at the Newark YMCA during my two years at ECC and we worked summer camp together. We got engaged at age 19 and got married during the summer just prior to the beginning of my junior year of college. We're still together after 49 years and I simply could not have continued on in my studies without the help and sacrifice of my wife Heidi.

After ECC I earned my Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from William Paterson University in January 1973 and started my career with the NJ State Department of Health

in February of the same year. In September of 1973 I enrolled in a Master's Degree program in Counseling at Seton Hall. Since the counseling program was housed in the School of Education, I earned my Master of Education (MEd) degree in 1976.

After spending a decade with the NJSDH I decided I wanted to enter the college teaching ranks and enrolled in a Doctoral Program at Temple University in Health Education. I graduated in 1986 with a Doctor of Education (EdD) degree in Health Ed. with a specialization in Health Counseling.

#### **Public Health Administrator 1973-1986**

I have been involved in the field of Public Health since 1973 when I graduated from William Paterson University with a BS in Psychology. My first job out of college was working for the NJ State Dept. of Health in their Sexually Transmitted Disease Program as a Field Worker.

I was promoted several times in the STD Program. After three years I was transferred to the Newark STD Program where I was made an Assistant Supervisor in charge of the Gonorrhea Control Program. In addition to running my own cases I supervised a staff of 10 Field Representatives and a Clinic Staff of around 15. I also started to do more extensive Community STD Education, speaking to large groups about STD Prevention (this was all pre-HIV/AIDS).

After 2 years in Newark I was promoted to Supervisor of the Central NJ STD Program based in New Brunswick that covered five counties and stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Delaware River. I supervised four clinics and a staff of about 50. At this point I was involved in every aspect of clinic management and community outreach.

After 2 years I was promoted again and worked in the state program headquarters alongside the State Coordinator of STD Education Services. I was the Health Education/Counseling Consultant for the entire NJSDH STD Program. I set up and conducted STD Education and Counseling training programs for all of the STD clinics in the state (over 30).

Towards the later part of my tenure in the STD Program, HIV/AIDS burst on the scene and I was recruited to serve the Assistant Commissioner with developing community AIDS Education programs.

#### **College Professor 1986-2014**

I was recruited for a faculty position at William Paterson University (WPU) as a result of my guest lecturer work on the campus. I began my career at William Paterson University in 1986 as an Assistant Professor. I earned tenure in 6 years, the shortest time possible and was promoted to Associate Professor as a condition of tenure. I retired as a Full Professor Emeritus in 2014.

While at the university I earned several honors. In my first year of teaching I was a recipient of a Merit Award for my scholarship and service to the university. I was elected three times to "Who's Who Among University Professors" spanning three decades of teaching excellence.

I served as a Faculty Senator for 6 years (three terms) taking part in governance issues ranging from choosing a new President to completely overhauling the General Education

Curriculum. I served on numerous committees and chaired the Continuing Education and Distance Learning Committee (CEDL). I turned down a request from the President of the university to become the Dean of CEDL because I did not want to leave the ranks of the Faculty to become a non-teaching administrator.

One of my most notable accomplishments at WPU was becoming a leader in Distance Learning. I was the first person at WPU to develop and teach an online course. I went on to develop three more fully-online courses and become a key person in the spread of online teaching and learning across the university.

### **Small Business Owner 1990-present**

I've started and been the President of two businesses since 1990 so I know firsthand the challenges that small-business owners face, especially in difficult times like today.

In 1990, while working as a college professor in NJ, I founded RJ Health Consultants with a colleague Dr Joanna Hayden. After three years I took over full control of the business and continued to run it myself for the next twenty years. The primary focus of my business was writing textbooks.

My second focus during the early years of RJ Health Consultants was working as a training consultant for a Medical Training Center in Newark NJ. The center provided state-of-the-art clinical training for doctors, nurses, and other health personnel from around the world.

In 2006 I took a six-month sabbatical and became a nationally-certified Counselor and Coach. With the help of a small-business loan I set up a small private practice devoted to stress coaching. During this time, I also wrote my first self-help book, and produced the relaxation CD that accompanied it.

In 2014, after retiring from full-time teaching and moving to Marco Island full-time I dissolved RJ Health Consultants and formed DR Rich Blonna LLC, a Florida Corporation. My new business is fully-online and focuses on producing and offering a variety of self-help training and educational materials. Over the past three years my company has continued to grow and as of today I've taught 8766 people from 146 countries around the world.

As a small businessman I take your business seriously and will fight for your rights and to make Marco Island a more business-friendly city.

- 
5. What is your website address and/or any other online information about you (bio, resume, etc.) you would like me to share with voters?

My campaign website is: [www.richblonna.com](http://www.richblonna.com)

2. Why are you running for this position?

I have always been interested in politics. At this point in my life I finally have the time and resources to commit to running for office. It is an exciting time to run for office as five of the

seven seats will be changing over. In addition to a new look on City Council, Marco Island has a new Police Chief, a new Fire Chief, and a new City Manager and Assistant City Manager. Change is in the air.

3. What are three things you want to accomplish if you are elected?

1. I want to clean-up our waterways and protect our beach.
2. I want to expand our open space, parks, and recreation.
3. I want to maintain our small-town character by promoting smart growth.

4. Name one past policy decision of the board you are running for that you disagree with that you would like to change if elected. Why?

I think the City Council could have gone farther in pushing the City of Marco Island to be more aggressive in implementing parts of their Stormwater Management Plan. Specifically, I think the City could have obtained state and federal grant money to fix the swales and catch basins that are currently not up to standards. I also think they could have beefed up enforcement of the Fertilizer Ordinance. These two parts of the Stormwater Management Plan are in place, do not need to be put on hold while we await the results of the Nutrient Source Evaluation and Assessment, and would help clean up our waterways right now.

5. What is the most important thing voters should know about you before making their decision in this race?

The most important thing is reflected in my campaign slogan Calm, Thoughtful Leadership. I picked my campaign slogan because it clearly describes the kind of leader I will be if I am elected to the Marco Island City Council.

I'm calm because I've studied and practiced stress management for 35 years. I know how to remain calm in the face of a crisis and stay focused when everyone else around me is losing their cool.

I'm thoughtful because my 30 year career as a college professor has taught me how to dig deeply into ideas and use my mind to analyze information and develop creative solutions to complex problems.

Lastly, leadership comes naturally to me. From being elected captain of three varsity teams in high school to leading a statewide professional society and international coaching group, I am used to stepping up and leading the way.

This short (2 min) video describes my campaign slogan in greater detail: [Calm, Thoughtful Leadership](#)

**Please email your responses to Sandy Parker, [sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com](mailto:sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com) , no later than September 15, 2020.**

**Thank you!**