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POLITICS

NEWS

# State Republican Party pulls plug on meeting called by warring Broward GOP



By ANTHONY MAN  
SUN SENTINEL | OCT 11, 2017



The Broward Republican Party came together Wednesday night — and remained far apart, fractured by two camps that continue to scheme against one another rather than organize for critical 2018 elections.

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More than 100 Republicans assembled for the event at Deicke Auditorium in Plantation, with the passionate party members watched over by three of the city's police officers.

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One of the party's factions assembled enough support for Wednesday's special meeting of committeemen and committeewomen from across the county, with the objective of removing county Republican Chairman Bob Sutton.

But the Republican Party of Florida, which has been receiving complaints from and about both sides in the Broward civil war, intervened.

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"On behalf of the RPOF, this meeting is not a legal meeting. No Republican business will be transacted here today," said J.C. Martin, parliamentarian for the state party. "This is a blatant case of an illegal meeting. Mr. Chairman, close this down."

Martin, who is also chairman of the Polk County Republican Party, said he was dispatched to Broward by Blaise Ingoglia, chairman of the

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"I'm looking for this insanity to go away and I'm looking to get Republicans elected," Sutton said.

But there's no indication that will happen. The bad blood has engulfed the effort to find a replacement for Sharon Day, who resigned as Broward's state committeewoman at the end of August because she is the new U.S. ambassador to Costa Rica.

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As state committeewoman 21 years, Day was a constant, steadying force in the local party, a leader in the state Republican Party and served as the national Republican Party secretary and as co-chairwoman, the No. 2 national official. Her presence had provided a significant measure of stability to the party's operation and her departure from the Broward group's board lifted the lid on the pot of simmering tensions.

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Party leader's violent criminal past engulfs Broward Republicans in turmoil

SEP 22, 2017 AT 5:35 AM

Broward Republicans have gone through many cycles of internal fighting in recent years, but [turmoil has reached new heights in 2017](#).

"Totally ridiculous," was the assessment Wednesday evening from Clarence McKee, a longtime Republican committeeman who worked as an advance man for Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign and later worked in the Reagan administration. "Ridiculous, debilitating, and makes them all

laughing stocks."

Republicans learned over the Labor Day weekend, more than five weeks ago, [that Rupert Tarsey, the party secretary they elected in May has a violent criminal past](#).

Ten years ago, when Tarsey was a student at an exclusive private high school in California, he beat a young woman with a claw hammer. The criminal case ended with a sentence of probation. Tarsey changed his name, moved to Florida and got involved in the Donald Trump presidential campaign and local Republican politics.

FEEDBACK



**Anthony Man**   
@browardpolitics

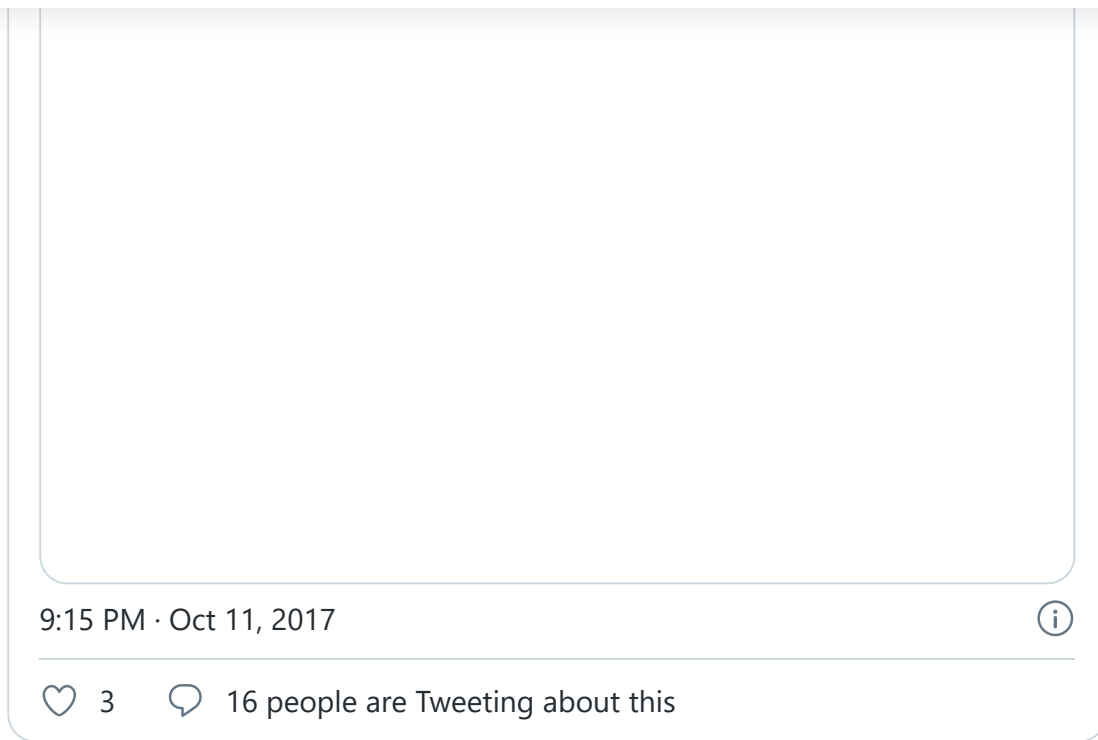


How bad is Broward Republican Party turmoil? Here are 2 of the 3 Plantation Police cars stationed outside GOP meeting

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But the item up for discussion on Wednesday was an attempt to remove Sutton. A faction that includes Tarsey accused Sutton of incompetence, and got the signatures of 20 percent of the committeemen and committeewomen to go along with a special meeting.

Martin said Tarsey couldn't provide evidence that party members were given sufficient notice, and said the gathering couldn't proceed.

**FEEDBACK**

No one knows what will happen next.

Tarsey said he didn't know whether there would be another move against Sutton. Michael Kane, the Tarsey ally who made the motion to remove Sutton, declined to comment. "I don't want to talk to the press right now," he said.

Sutton, whose attempt to suspend Tarsey as secretary when his background came to light was overturned, said he didn't know what would happen next with Tarsey or attempts to oust him.

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Michele Merrell of Fort Lauderdale and Diana Taub of Pembroke Pines have said they are running to replace Day. Their contest took a nasty turn this week when an anonymous email reported that one of Merrill's supporters is a "raging homosexual," and Republicans should vote instead for a "Christian" for the job. Taub said Wednesday she was blindsided by the email, and disavowed it.

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Jack Majeske, a longtime committeeman and past president of the Broward Log Cabin Republicans, which has many LGBT members, said the infighting is making it difficult to elect Republicans locally.

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JOKE. How the hell are we supposed to elect Republicans?"

[Read a full account of the Tarsey/Ditsworth case at SunSentinel.com/politics](#)

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Anthony Man is the Sun Sentinel's political writer. Concentrating on local political people, parties and trends, he also covers state and national politics from a South Florida perspective. He previously covered Palm Beach County government and made repeated reporting trips to Tallahassee. He has also covered state and local politics in Illinois.

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