

Nate Beason looks back on 12 years of service on the Board of Supervisors

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Nate Beason never intended to become a Nevada County supervisor.

He and his wife moved here in 2000 to retire, not enter politics. They'd been looking for a new home across a wide area and Nevada County grew on them.

Beason, now 73 and stepping away from public life after his third term on the Board of Supervisors, settled into his new life here. He began writing columns for The Union newspaper, discussing politics, among other topics.

Some 18 months passed and a few friends asked Beason to run for office. A dinner gathering followed, his friends pressuring him to run.

Beason was clear: He had no intention of seeking office.

"We went to bed, woke up the next morning and said, 'I think I'm going to run.'"

That was in 2003. Beason ran, took second place in the primary and won his District 1 seat in the general election. He won two more terms after that.

Beason's time in office will end on his own terms. He opted against running again and will cede his seat to Heidi Hall at a 10 a.m. Monday ceremony at the Eric Rood Administrative Center.

"It's clear that we have some differences of opinion, but it's also clear that he did his homework and was responsive to his constituents," Hall said. "I expect to be following in that mold.

"I am personally grateful to him for the great meetings that we've had to make sure this transition is smooth," she added.

Political life

A large part of Beason's first campaign included walking his district. Beason figures he rapped on the doors of 7,000 homes.

That face-to-face contact was key to his success. People want to see the candidates, look them in the eye and speak their mind. Talking to strangers who opened their doors

to his knock, Beason introduced himself, explained his run for office and asked for feedback.

“No one slammed the door in my face,” he said. “No one sicced the dog on me, though I did get bitten by a couple of dogs.”

According to Beason, the Natural Heritage 2020 Project created a huge rift in the community. Approved in 2000 by supervisors, NH 2020 sought to make a policy framework and set the direction for the future of recreation here.

The project was scuttled, though its shadow continued to loom and cause division, he said. Beason decided he couldn't do any worse than the current elected leaders.

The issue of marijuana, front and center for the past few years, has caused sharp conflict in Nevada County, but Beason said it doesn't compare to what NH 2020 did.

Marijuana, however, has led to plenty of contentious meetings and harsh words.

Looking back, Beason said the Board of Supervisors was 20 to 30 years late in developing cannabis regulations.

“It's clear — Measure W got hammered. Prop 64 passed. I was dead wrong,” Beason said.

“It's no secret. It's just part of the culture,” he added later. “There's going to be a lot of work for local governments.”

Accomplishments

After 12 years in office, Beason has a handful of projects he's helped shepherd that stick in his mind.

Improvements at La Barr Meadows Road and Highway 49 is near the top of the list. The project, which cost about \$17 million, widened lanes, installed lights, reconfigured connecting roads and built noise barriers.

Beason also points to the renewal of state payments in lieu of tax.

The state had stopped those payments to counties, which stem from state-owned land that provides no tax revenue. Beason served on a panel that convinced the Governor's Office to restart them.

The group also lobbied the federal government for its own payment in lieu of taxes.

“Keeping the county afloat fiscally has been a big deal for us,” Beason said.

Supervisor Ed Scofield has worked alongside Beason for years. The two haven't always agreed, though they remained cordial.

"At least on the dais, we were always able to move on to the next subject," Scofield said. "I think we're going to miss him, and that's not taking anything away from Heidi. We're just going to miss him."

County CEO Rick Haffey praised Beason in an email.

"Nate Beason is one of the finest elected officials I ever have worked with in my career," he said. "He exemplifies what being an excellent public servant is all about."

After over a decade of public service, Beason is ready for a break. He anticipates returning to community service in some form, though he sees no future for him in elected office.

"That's not because I've had a bitter experience," he said. "I've enjoyed this job.

"It's time for me to go," he added.

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ABOUT NATE BEASON

Nate Beason was born in Long Beach, California and grew up in the San Joaquin Valley. He was a naval officer for 30 years, rising to the rank of Captain. He served in eight ships, serving as commanding officer in three of them in addition to commanding two shore activities. In 1993, he commanded a seven-ship international naval task force involved in Operation Restore Hope in Somalia. He is a veteran of Viet Nam and made three deployments to the Middle East in command of warships.

After retiring from the Navy, Nate was a project manager for a 400-user computer software installation and implementation project, and he taught leadership and management skills to company executives for five years.

He has a BA and an MA from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a Master's degree from Stanford. In 1989, he was the Arthur S. Moreau Fellow in International Relations and Diplomacy at Stanford. He was adjunct professor at U.C. Berkeley from 1995 to 1998.

Nate was elected for a four-year term as District 1 Supervisor, 2005-2008 and was selected Chairman for 2006. In 2008 he was elected to a second term for 2009-2012 after running unopposed, and was selected Vice-Chair for 2009 and Chair for 2010. He

won a third term in 2012, served as Vice Chair in 2013 and Chair in 2014. Nate also serves on a number of advisory boards and commissions, including the Nevada County Transportation Commission, where he served as Chair for two years; the Transit Services Commission, the Area 4 Agency on Aging Governing Board (2016 Chair), and the Traffic Safety Committee. In addition, Nate serves as Nevada County's representative to the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), the latter for which he served as Chair for 2014.

Nate is a life member of the Disabled American Veterans and the University of California Alumni Association. He has been married for 50 years to the former Betty Hopkins. They have two children and three grandchildren. In addition to his grandchildren, Nate enjoys fly-fishing, reading and gardening.

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