

The Florida Times-Union

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SAVINGS

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Sunday
AUGUST 27, 2017
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BORTLES TO START OPENER
Sports, C-1



TRUMP INTERVENED ON ARPAIO'S BEHALF, SOURCES SAY
Nation, A-4



POLICE ID GUNMAN WHO DIED IN SHOOTING
Metro, B-1

Mayor Curry won't weigh in on monument debate

Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry is seen at a July news conference with City Council President Anna Brosche, who recently made a proposal addressing the display of Jacksonville's Confederate monuments. Curry has not taken a public stance on the topic. (Bob Self/Florida Times-Union)



Typically vocal leader silent about Confederate statues

By Nate Monroe
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As a candidate for mayor — running against an incumbent whom some civic leaders considered too often paralyzed by indecision — Lenny Curry vowed he would use the bully pulpit to lead community conversations about discrimination in Jacksonville and play a key role in

coming up with solutions. But Curry has repeatedly refused to say whether he supports removing Confederate monuments from prominent public spaces, eschewing his strong-mayor persona amid a charged local debate that is entwined with Jacksonville's unflattering history with racism and segregation.

Brosche recently proposed inventorying the city's monuments so they can eventually be moved to museums or placed in other settings where they can be "historically contextualized." She has not put forward any legislation yet — and has since said she's open to hearing other suggestions about what

Council President Anna Brosche
DEBATE continues on A-4

HARVEY DEALS TEXAS A BLOW



Trucks move through floodwaters left behind by Hurricane Harvey in Aransas Pass, Texas. Harvey rolled over the Texas Gulf Coast on Saturday, smashing homes and businesses and lashing the shore with wind and rain so intense that drivers were forced off the road because they could not see. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)

State prepares for historic flooding in hurricane's wake

By Frank Bajak
Associated Press

CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS | Harvey spun deeper into Texas and unloaded ponderous amounts of rain Saturday after the once-fearsome hurricane crashed into vulnerable homes and businesses along the coastline in a blow that killed at least one person and injured up to 14.

Throughout the region between Corpus Christi and Houston, many people feared that toll was only the beginning. They did not know the full scope of damage already done, and they dreaded the destruction that was yet to come from a storm that could linger for days and unload more than

40 inches of rain on cities including dangerously flood-prone Houston, the nation's fourth-largest.

Long after the system came ashore, weather conditions prevented emergency crews from getting into many of the hardest-hit places.

In the island community of Port Aransas, population 3,800, officials were unable to fully survey the town because of "massive" damage. Police and heavy equipment had only made it into the northernmost street. Mayor Charles Bujan had few other details.

"I can tell you I have a very bad feeling and that's about it," he said.

Some of the worst damage appeared to be in Rockport, a coastal city of about 10,000 that was directly in the storm's path. The mayor said his community took a blow "right on the nose" that left "widespread devastation," including homes, businesses and schools that were heavily damaged. Some structures were destroyed.

Rockport's roads were a mess of toppled power poles. A trailer blocked much of one major intersection. Pieces of 100-year-old oak trees impeded the slow passage of emergency vehicles. Wood framing from ripped-apart houses was strewn along Route 35 on the town's southern end.

HARVEY continues on A-4



Jennifer Bryant looks over the debris where her family business once stood in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey on Saturday. One person is dead and up to 14 were injured during the storm. Widespread flooding is expected as rain could continue for several days. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip)

Weather
Coastal showers
Forecast on A-2

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President Donald Trump has pardoned former sheriff Joe Arpaio after his conviction for intentionally disobeying a judge's order in an immigration case. The White House announced the move Friday night. (File/Associated Press)

Sources: Trump intervened for Arpaio

President reportedly asked Sessions about possibility of dropping charges

By Philip Rucker & Ellen Nakashima

The Washington Post.

As Joseph Arpaio's federal case headed toward trial this past spring, President Donald Trump wanted to act to help the former Arizona county sheriff who had become a campaign-trail companion and a partner in their crusade against illegal immigration.

The president asked Attorney General Jeff Sessions whether it would be possible for the government to drop the criminal case against Arpaio, but was advised that would be inappropriate, according to three people with knowledge of the conversation.

After talking with Sessions, Trump decided to let the case go to trial, and if Arpaio was convicted, he could grant clemency.

So the president waited, all the while planning to issue a pardon if Arpaio was found in contempt of court for defying a federal judge's order to stop detaining people merely because he suspected them of being undocumented immigrants. Trump was, in the words of one associate, "gung-ho about it."

"We knew the president wanted to do this for some time now and had worked to prepare for whenever the moment may come," said one White House official who spoke on the

condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the action.

Responding to questions about Trump's conversation with Sessions, White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said, "It's only natural the president would have a discussion with administration lawyers about legal matters. This case would be no different."

The Justice Department declined to comment.

Trump's decision to issue his first pardon Friday evening for Arpaio was the culmination of a five-year political friendship with roots in the "birther" movement to undermine President Barack Obama. In an extraordinary exercise of presidential power, Trump bypassed the traditional review process to ensure that Arpaio, who was convicted of contempt of court, would face no time in prison.

Trump's pardon, issued without consulting the Justice Department, raised a storm of protest over the weekend, including from some fellow Republicans, and threatens to become a stain on this president's legacy. His effort to see if the case could be dropped showed a troubling disregard for the traditional wall between the White House and the Justice Department, and taken together with similar actions could undermine

respect for the rule of law, experts said.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., signaled his disagreement with the pardon through his spokesman. "Law-enforcement officials have a special responsibility to respect the rights of everyone in the United States," Ryan spokesman Doug Andres said in a statement, according to The Associated Press. "We should not allow anyone to believe that responsibility is diminished by this pardon."

Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona said: "The president has the authority to make this pardon, but doing so at this time undermines his claim for the respect of rule of law as Mr. Arpaio has shown no remorse for his actions."

The state's junior senator, Republican Jeff Flake, also disagreed with the move.

"I would have preferred that the president honor the judicial process and let it take its course," Flake tweeted.

Arpaio faced up to six months in prison and was due to be sentenced in October. During his 23 years as Maricopa County sheriff, Arpaio was a lightning rod, in part because of his aggressive crackdown on illegal immigrants. He also was accused of racial profiling, failure to investigate sex crimes, poor treatment of prisoners and other instances of police misconduct.

To Trump, however, Arpaio is an American hero — a man who enlisted in

the military at age 18 after the outbreak of the Korean War, worked as a beat cop in Washington and Las Vegas and as a special agent investigating drug crimes around the world, and then got elected sheriff in the epicenter of the nation's roiling immigration debate.

Arpaio's age weighed on Trump, some of his confidants said. The 71-year-old president could not stomach seeing an 85-year-old he admired as a law-and-order icon wasting away in a jail cell.

Trump's spring inquiry about intervening in Arpaio's case is consistent with his attempt to interfere with the federal investigation of Michael Flynn, the former national security adviser. Trump also made separate appeals in March to Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats and National Security Agency Director Michael Rogers to publicly deny the existence of any evidence of collusion between the Russians and the Trump campaign during the 2016 election.

Trump's pardon of Arpaio "was his backhand way of doing what he wanted to do at the front end," said Robert Bauer, a former White House counsel in the Obama administration. "He just wanted to kill the prosecution off. He couldn't do it the one way, so he ended up doing it the other way. This is just another vivid demonstration of how far removed from an appropriate exercise of the pardon power this was."

HARVEY

Continued from A-1

Harvey's relentless wind tore the metal sides off the high school gym and twisted the steel door frame of its auditorium. The windows of some police vehicles had been blown out.

"We're still in the very infancy stage of getting this recovery started," said Larry Sinclair, the Aransas County spokesman.

Rockport Mayor Charles "C.J." Wax told The Weather Channel that the city's emergency response system had been hampered by the loss of cellphone service and other forms of communication.

On Friday, Rockport Mayor Pro Tem Patrick Rios offered ominous advice, telling the station that people who chose not to evacuate should mark their arm with a Sharpie pen, implying that the marks would make it easier for rescuers to identify them.

Citing a county judge, the Austin American-Statesman reported one death from Harvey in Rockport, and 12 to 14 people injured.

In Port Aransas, the mayor had called for a mandatory evacuation and said he knew some people had stayed, but he did not know how many.

Elsewhere in the storm's immediate aftermath, Coast Guard helicopters rescued 18 people from boats and barges in distress, said Capt. Tony Hahn, commander of the Corpus Christi sector.

The city's port was closed and will need a lot of repairs before it can reopen. Because Corpus Christi is the third-largest petrochemical port in the nation, authorities will also be on the lookout for spills, Hahn said.

The fiercest hurricane to hit the U.S. in more than a decade came ashore late Friday about 30 miles northeast of Corpus Christi as a mammoth Category 4 storm with 130 mph winds.

By dawn, nearly 300,000 consumers were without power in the coastal region, and nearly 20 inches of rain had fallen in some places.

Harvey weakened to a tropical storm by early afternoon, with maximum sustained winds falling to about 70 mph. The storm was centered about 60 miles southeast of San Antonio. It was moving north at 2 mph, the hurricane center said.

The hurricane posed the first major emergency management test of President Donald Trump's administration.

Trump met with his

Cabinet and other senior administration officials to discuss the federal response to the damage and flooding, the White House said Saturday in a statement.

The president held a video conference from Camp David in which he instructed relevant departments and agencies to "stay fully engaged and positioned to support his number one priority of saving lives," the statement said.

Trump, who on Friday signed a federal disaster declaration for coastal counties, also reminded department heads that the full impact of the storm will not be apparent for days. On Twitter, he commended the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for his handling of the disaster.

In Corpus Christi, the major city closest to the storm's center, wind whipped palm trees and stinging sheets of horizontal rain slapped against hotels and office buildings along the seawall as the storm made landfall.

Daybreak revealed downed lampposts and tree limbs and roof tiles torn off buildings.

Along Interstate 45 leaving Galveston, the rain was so intense that drivers were to stop under bridges because they could not see in front of them.

In Houston, rain fell Saturday at nearly 3 inches an hour, leaving some streets and underpasses underwater. The many drainage channels known as bayous that carry excess water to the Gulf were flowing freely but rising.

"Flooding is a minor issue so far," said Harris County Judge Ed Emmett, the chief administrator of the county that includes Houston. "Most of the watersheds are well within banks, but we're not out of this."

Francisco Sanchez, with the Harris County Emergency Management Office, said the storm would "linger a while."

"Someone is going to get those very high rainfall totals," he said. "Hopefully it's not us, but we're in that possibility area."

About 4,500 inmates were evacuated from three state prisons in Brazoria County south of Houston because the nearby Brazos River was rising.

Fueled by warm Gulf of Mexico waters, Harvey grew rapidly, accelerating from a Category 1 early Friday to a Category 4 by evening. Its transformation from an ordinary storm to a life-threatening behemoth took only 56 hours, an incredibly fast intensification.

intention of holding similar town hall meetings.

It's not clear when Brosche will file legislation, or what such a bill would look like — there are several Confederate references woven into the city's fabric, including on the names of some schools, which are the purview of the School Board.

The JAX Chamber and the Civic Council — the city's two leading business groups — have backed Brosche's call for a discussion about the future of the monuments, though both stopped short of explicitly endorsing her proposal to move them from public property to other venues.

It's also not certain that any one path forward can get a majority on the 19-member City Council. Tuesday's meeting, during which public comment lasted past 11 p.m., demonstrated deep divisions among the council and in the community.

The only thing that is clear is that, for now, the ball is squarely in the council's court.

In a meeting with the Times-Union editorial board in June — before the local debate on Confederate monuments had heated up — Curry said he had not had any discussions about the issue. He seemed confident and not concerned about a future debate.

"We are here for a reason, and if it's something that's not on our agenda ... but it shows up on our front porch, we will be calm, we will deal with it," he said. "If it happens, we'll handle it appropriately."

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DEBATE

Continued from A-1

to do with the memorials — but hundreds of residents flooded the council chambers Tuesday, arguing over the issue late into the night.

Curry has been on the sidelines, a remarkable turn for a highly competitive chief executive who otherwise eagerly and vocally embraces his role in Jacksonville's strong-mayor form of government.

He won't say what he thinks about Brosche's proposal and has deferred to the City Council on decisions about the city's Confederate monuments.

When residents email him about it, his account replies with a generic message saying Curry is "maintaining my focus on the priorities of public safety and managing the resources and investments that improve the lives of Jacksonville's families" and that when "council introduces and votes on legislation, I will evaluate how it impacts our future."

His message ends by encouraging residents to contact Brosche if they want to contribute to the debate.

Curry's reticence has not gone unnoticed.

"It would seem you are passing the buck and turning your back on this issue," one resident, who is against Brosche's proposal, emailed back.

"I understand your reluctance in tackling this hot issue and leaving it up to the City Council, but I believe you need to take a stand and not let this con-

tinue without your input," another resident said.

A third: "why don't you stand up for our confederate monuments, because your [sic] a coward ... I voted for a good person ... I got screwed."

Curry is adamant that he remains focused on the issues he believes are most critical for Jacksonville residents — like his budget proposal to hire 100 more cops, which the council's finance committee approved Friday.

"I fundamentally reject any suggestion that I'm on the sideline here," Curry said in an interview Saturday, reacting to the language in this story characterizing his position. "This isn't my game. Someone else created this situation.

"I'm battling every day on the field for the issues that matter for the people of Jacksonville."

Asked about Curry's decision to stay away from the debate, Brosche had no comment.

"Basically we're having a history argument. A lot of politicians just don't want to get caught up in that," said University of North Florida political science professor Matt Corrigan. "I credit the councilwoman for taking a position on a really difficult issue."

NOT THE SILENT TYPE

In the aftermath of violence earlier this month in Charlottesville, Va., Curry forcefully denounced the white-supremacist groups behind the turbulence, but he indicated he would sit out the mushrooming national debate on the appropriateness of public memorials that honor

Confederate generals and soldiers who fought to preserve slavery.

After Brosche announced her plan to inventory then move such local monuments — which would most prominently include the 62-foot granite Confederate monument in Hemming Park in front of City Hall — Curry's position did not change.

Curry has said he wants to remain laser focused on his top priorities: Bolstering public safety and programs aimed at helping at-risk children and young adults.

City Councilman Bill Gulliford, an opponent of Brosche's idea, said Curry is acting appropriately. He also blamed Brosche for announcing a divisive proposal without input from her colleagues.

"What if (Curry) jumps out on this thing and there is never any legislation?" Gulliford said. "I think he waits and sees where it's going. On this issue I don't have a problem with that."

But Curry has weighed in before on issues far outside local policy matters. On the day President Donald Trump announced the United States' intention to withdraw from a major international climate-change accord, Curry tweeted that the president "campaigns on American jobs, cutting regs that killed those jobs & he won. He's doing what he said he would do."

Curry said after the fact that his tweet wasn't intended to be an endorsement of Trump's position on the climate agreement, though it was widely interpreted as such.

He also indicated to the Times-Union earlier in the summer that he is willing to speak up if the Duval School Board makes decisions he disagrees with, even though the mayor's office has no formal role in local education policy.

When Curry wants to get involved in council deliberations, he can make a splash.

Two days after City Councilman Garrett Dennis filed legislation to add nearly \$2 million to city-funded after-school programs, Curry one-upped him, making a joint announcement with City Councilman Reggie Brown that the administration is looking to add \$2.7 million to those programs.

"It's interesting," Dennis said of Curry's desire to remain on the sidelines in the Confederate monuments debate. "He's been on the forefront of every other major issue in our city. I hope he shows leadership on this because it is a priority regardless of which way it falls."

'I WILL LEAD'

The question of whether the city should expand local discrimination protections to include LGBT people was a hot-button issue during the 2015 campaign. Former Mayor Alvin Brown had enraged pro-expansion advocates when he refused to take a position in a 2012 City Council debate over the issue that ended in defeat.

It was in that context that Curry pledged he would take the lead on community discussions about discrimination, though he never commit-

ted to expanding or changing the city's anti-discrimination law, called the human rights ordinance, and said he was skeptical about the need for it.

"Oppression and discrimination are wrong, and as mayor I will not only be part of discussions about our problems, but I will lead by bringing together local stakeholders, business owners and faith leaders to ensure we continue to have a city where that respects and celebrates our shared goals and our differences," Curry wrote in a Times-Union candidate questionnaire at the time. "With my leadership, the people of Jacksonville will be the source of solutions to Jacksonville's challenges."

After defeating Brown, Curry held a series of town hall meetings on the issue and concluded that no change in the city's discrimination law was needed, though he did by executive order expand City Hall's employment policies to include lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees.

That didn't go far enough for some council members, who eventually filed legislation to expand the human rights ordinance to include the city's gay residents.

Curry refused to say whether he would support that legislation if it made it to his desk. It eventually did, and Curry neither signed it nor vetoed it — he allowed it to become law without his signature.

Confederate monuments were not an issue in the 2015 campaign, and Curry apparently has no