

Take care when making a political friend



You cannot be too careful with who you surround yourself with, in life and in politics.

Then again, no matter how deep and extensive the vetting, you can never really tell what is in the heart of a friend, a

comrade, a companion or a political ally.

A case in point is the pathetic case of former U.S. Navy Captain Wade Sanders of San Diego, a Swift Boat Vietnam War buddy of Sen. John Kerry, who campaigned for him for president in 2004. Sanders, it was revealed days ago, was stripped of his Silver Star, the country's third highest medal, by the U.S. Navy Secretary Ray Mabus. It was a medal that had been awarded him for gallantry in action in Vietnam that was based on bogus information.

In a terse statement, a spokesman for Mabus said the secretary made the decision based on the recommendation by the Navy Department Board of Medals and Decorations. It was an award that never should have been made in the first place, the spokesman said.

Sanders, who was former Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy under President Bill Clinton, was the leader of a band of Swift Boat veterans who had served in Vietnam with Kerry. They took the stage at the 2004 Democrat convention in Boston, that nominated Kerry for president, when Kerry made his "reporting for duty" speech.

That was also the convention, by the way, that introduced Barack Obama, then still an obscure Illinois state senator, to the nation when Kerry had Obama give the keynote address, a speech that electrified the convention.

Sanders, during the presidential campaign, was Kerry's lead attack dog when it came to refuting charges by anti-Kerry Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, who questioned Kerry's war record. Sanders referred to President George Bush and his supporters as "chicken hawks."

But that is only part of the story. The other part is that Sanders is in federal prison, serving a 37-month sentence on child-pornography charges. Sanders came under investigation by the FBI in 2007 and in May 2008, agents armed with a search warrant seized his computer and files from his San Diego home. Although Sanders maintained that he downloaded images of children in sexual situations with adults for "research," he was arrested and pleaded guilty to possessing child pornography and sent to prison in 2009.

In a horrific sentencing memo from the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Southern District of California, it was made clear that Sanders had been into child pornography several years before the 2007 investigation, which would include the time he was actively campaigning for Kerry.

There is absolutely no evidence that Kerry was ever aware of Sanders' behavior, and no doubt he would have banished him from his circle of friends and campaigners had he known.

Yet, it points out how dangerously fragile political life and friendships can

Group tries again for charter school

By Chrs Camile
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BOSTON — Backers of a proposed charter school in Lowell are once again seeking approval from state education officials, nearly a year after its initial application was rejected.

The Collegiate Charter School of Lowell is the largest of seven groups hoping to get permission from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to open a new school. If approved, the school would open in 2013

Lowell

and eventually serve 1,200 students in grades K-12.

State Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester rejected a bid to establish the Lowell school last September, saying it did not meet the basic criteria required to advance in the application process.

The latest proposal is nearly identical to last year's, but officials say they have addressed several of Chester's concerns.

Jose Alfonso, director of board and government affairs for SABIS International, a private, for-profit education-management company that will run the school, said the document now includes more information about the city, its student population, and how the school will serve students who are not proficient in English.

"We have the benefit of improving on last year's application, and we have a proven model that the Department of Education acknowledges and recognizes," Alfonso said. "There is a great deal of need for alternatives to the traditional public schools."

The proposal calls for the Collegiate Charter School of Lowell, billed as an academically rigorous institution focused on preparing every student for college, to open in September 2013 as a 540-student facility serving grades K-5. The school would add one grade each year, ultimately becoming a 1,200-student K-12 school.

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THESE LITTLE DEPUTIES DAZZLED



Billerica's Laura Sargent, right, leads the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance to open the graduation ceremony of the Middlesex Sheriff's Youth Public Safety Academy last week in Billerica. At left, Sheriff Peter Koutoujian and Billerica Police Chief Daniel Rosa recite the pledge as well.



PHOTOS BY JOE BROWN/PHOTOS.COM

Tyngsboro's Cate Bartin leads the campers from the sheriff's public-safety academy into graduation ceremonies at the sheriff's training academy in Billerica last week.

Bedford's Cameron Maurice feigns an attitude as he sports a sheriff's cap while waiting for the graduation to begin.

Chief's call Water bills hurt Tewksbury renters for mark phone

By Joyce Tsai
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The biggest complaint, according to residents, is the roof design that came with homes built during the first phase in 2006. Fox Run resident Bob Parker showed Planning Board members a copy of a report at the Eagle Rivet Roof Service Corp. that claims that the roofs were not designed to deal with significant ice dams.

But Daigora pointed out that ice Please see **HOUSING/5**

Talks stall on Billerica housing Planning Board to meet again on development

By Evan Lips
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BILLERICA — The Planning Board will have to meet again before it can vote on a golf-club owner's proposal to add 21 more homes to a 36-unit housing development.

With Planning Board

Chairman David Saviano and member David Kinsella absent, the five members present at last night's meeting decided they couldn't make a decision because the developers waited too long to submit detailed site plans to the town.

Attorney James Daigora, representing Country Club at Billerica owner Bill Ferren, said he didn't think officials are "far from resolving the issues" that are delaying a vote.

But member Bob Casey said items like "traffic, drainage and all other elements of a site plan were not provided to us in a timely manner."

Ferren is looking to build another round of homes at the club's Village at Fox Run, a 55-and-older development. But the process got complicated after a group of angry Fox Run residents showed up at the Planning Board's June 13 meeting to complain about structural problems they say are plaguing the development's first phase of homes.

Daigora said Ferren's development group has agreed to resolve many of the building issues, while co-developer Stephen Dresser said Ferren decided to "go the extra step" after hearing the complaints.

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