

## MINNEAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL: 5th ward contest heats up

Written by Abeni Hill

Friday, 13 September 2013 15:50

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Minneapolis 5th Ward city council candidates recently participated in a candidates' forum which provided them an opportunity to explain how, if elected, their time in office would impact the community.

The candidates who participated in the forum on Saturday, Sept. 7, included Ian Alexander, Brett Buckner, Kale Severson and Blong Yang.

MN Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (NOC) hosted the forum at the Capri Theater, 2027 Broadway Ave. N., Minneapolis. While NOC wrote most of the questions, other community organizations and audience members were invited to submit questions as well. Topics ranged from the employment gap to affordable housing and homelessness.

"Having a home and somewhere where you can actually have a roof over your head – especially in a climate like Minnesota – is not just critical, there is no other way around it," said Buckner.

Buckner said Minneapolis has a duty to stop homelessness and suggested working with various faith-based organizations to make sure no one is sleeping on the street.

Severson said that faith-based organizations are not for everyone.

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“Not everybody uses faith-based organization to better themselves,” said Severson. “We need to be fully inclusive.”

With Minnesota’s harsh winters, Severson agreed, access to housing is crucial. “Housing is a right in Minnesota, not just a choice.”

Addressing funding for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, Yang brought up the \$600 million Vikings Stadium. He argued that Minneapolis residents could get just as much funding to eliminate homelessness.

“If we had the will to eliminate homelessness, we could fund it with \$600 million,” said Yang. “The fact that we are not doing that is just a tragedy.”

Alexander said that over the years funding for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund has decreased from \$9 billion to \$6 billion. “Politicians talk about doing things for the homelessness, but when push comes to shove, often the big money controls where money is spent.”

If elected, Alexander said he would sit on the community development board that makes decisions about how money is delegated and work with organizations that assist people who cannot afford housing.

When questioned was about the employment gap, Yang said most of the hiring of minorities occurs in places that have a high percentage of minorities. By enforcing minority hiring bills, Yang said more minorities in north Minneapolis will have a greater opportunity of being hired. He also wants to work with the Minneapolis Civil Rights Department to get this issue resolved.

“Get our Civil Rights Department to be funded properly so these minority hiring bills actually happen,” said Yang.

Alexander said he would work with the city to get north Minneapolis schools up to code.

“It is just unacceptable for above 50 percent of African-American males between the ages of 18-30 (to be unemployed or under employed),” said Alexander, who believes that the source of the solution is better education.

Buckner wants to create jobs through preservation of the city.

“We have to start to think about an equitable solution to rebuild our community,” said Buckner.

He said the infrastructure of the city is weak and North Minneapolis can hire workers to make the homes more physically sound.

“Once we have the grand avenues, now we start to build better facilities,” said Buckner. “We need to start building for the next 100 years.”

Before the candidates offered their opening statements, Mike Griffin from FairVote Minnesota

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acquainted voters with the new rank choice voting system, which will be used to help decided this November's mayoral race.

"That gives you more choice and more choice gives you more power," said Griffin.