

Minneapolis mayoral candidates debate tough issues

Written by Lydia Schwartz

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Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak has served the city for 12 years and whether you believe for better or worse, his successor faces some daunting issues ahead.

With the election looming, and over 35 choices on the ballot, some of the candidates gathered in south Minneapolis to discuss a wide array of the city's toughest issues.

After a dysfunctional city convention in June, the Minneapolis DFL was unable to decide on an official endorsement for the mayoral race, so candidate alignments were self-identified.

Simplify Government candidate Mark Anderson believes in cutting social services down to the bare basics. He argued that one of the best ways to fight gentrification trends in Minneapolis is to cut occupational and business licensing costs in order to make it easier for poor people to become entrepreneurs.

Candidates were asked about the large amount of police misconduct settlements paid out by the city, and whether officers should be required to carry individual professional liability coverage, similar to malpractice insurance. Anderson responded that the idea requires more study. "I have doubts whether it could differentiate enough between good cops and bad cops," said Anderson.

The Civilian Review Authority oversees misconduct allegations and Anderson argued that it needs to be rethought and done right.

"We need to add a level of professionalism to the police department," said Anderson. He said having police officers wear on-body cameras would both protect the police from false allegations and hold them accountable. Anderson is also in favor of changing city ordinances to decrease the penalties for cannabis possession and its priority for law enforcement.



DFL candidate Bob Fine has served as a Minneapolis Park Board Commissioner-At-Large since 1998 and argued against the idea of police carrying liability insurance.

"The City of Minneapolis is self-insured so they taxpayers would essentially be covering the cost. The problem is much deeper. It all has to do with police training. The Civilian Review Authority doesn't have the teeth it needs to reprimand bad behavior," said Fine.

One of Fine's ideas is to utilize land trusts because it would allow more people to afford a home

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and that housing developers have an obligation to create decent, affordable housing.

Pirate Party candidate Kurtis W. Hanna based his platform on changing marijuana laws and saving the city money. He said African-Americans are more likely to be arrested than Caucasians under current drug possession laws and making it the lowest priority for police officers has worked well in other cities.

"Existing city ordinances reflect Minnesota's large beer community and marijuana use should be treated the same," said Hanna.

Hanna said he is not sure whether having police officers carry individual professional liability insurance would save the city money. He agreed that Minneapolis needs a stronger Civilian Review Authority with subpoena power, a system of checks and balances on the police department, and the ability to take disciplinary action against misconduct.

"I agree that just because an individual has a large amount of allegations against them, it doesn't mean they are a bad police officer. It requires independent review of the circumstances and public transparency of the findings," said Hanna.

DFL candidate Gregg Iverson is a retired public servant who believes that the city should do more to work with older citizens to help them stay in their homes longer.

Iverson said the city should pay for professional liability insurance for individual police officers but also feels that it all comes down to better training.

"Over the last seven years, the City of Minneapolis has paid out over \$20 million in settlements related to police misconduct," said Iverson. "Something needs to change."

Green Party candidate and New Progressive Alliance endorsed, Doug Mann, argued in favor of eminent domain to reduce speculative pressure on housing prices, enforcing fair housing and labor laws, and passing a living wage ordinance that he said will help lessen gentrification trends.

Mann argued that the so-called War on Drugs only serves to marginalize and disenfranchise people of color.

"It's an unjust war that we should change and do everything we can to undermine its application in (Minneapolis)," said Mann. "Unfortunately, this is an issue of conflict with existing state laws, but I am in favor of the city seeking alternatives to prosecution."

Lauraist Communist candidate John Charles Wilson advocated for the city to take over vacant lots to build affordable housing. He is also an advocate for a municipal bank that could provide loans for housing renovations. Wilson said abusive marijuana use may cause problems for some people, but the current laws against it only create more.

"It should be the dead last priority for city police," said Wilson.

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