



## Housing, wiretaps discussed during forum in Edgebrook

by BRIAN NADIG

Five of the six candidates in the 39th and 41st Ward aldermanic races said that they would work toward bringing 50 new affordable housing units to their wards, while only one of the six candidates would name their choice for mayor at a forum Jan. 26.

About 160 people attended the event hosted by the Edgebrook Community Association at Saint Mary of the Woods, 7033 N. Moselle Ave. The moderator was ECA secretary Mary Biesty.

Challenging Alderman Anthony Napolitano is 41st Ward Democratic Committeeman Tim Heneghan.

In the 39th Ward, those running to replace retiring Alderman Margaret Laurino are Democratic Committeeman Robert Murphy, former Cook County Department of Homeland Security chief of staff Samantha Nugent, Albany Park Community Center director of development and fund-raising Casey Smagala and Chicago police officer Joe Duplechin.

The candidates were asked if they would support a pledge to bring 50 new affordable housing units to their ward. Seven North and Northwest Side aldermen had signed such a pledge in 2017. The pledge called for the units to be Chicago Housing Authority-subsidized, but the question did not mention the housing authority.

Napolitano said that he would not sign such a pledge because the 41st Ward already has thousands of below-market rate apartments near the O'Hare corridor and that the city's 10-percent affordability requirement for new zoning projects is sufficient.

Developers will seek larger developments to make up for the lost income from affordable units, which are targeted to families making no more than 60 percent of the area's median income, Napolitano said.

"We're just building density, and this is not what this single-family neighborhood is about," he said.

His opponent Heneghan said that he would work to bring 50 new affordable units to the ward.

"I'm going to say there are areas in the ward where that can be accomplished. ... There are people out there who need help," Heneghan said, adding that as a child his family fell on hard times and needed food stamps.

The 39th Ward candidates all said that bringing more affordable units to the ward should be a community-driven process with input from all of the stakeholders.

"I'm not dead set on a number, but I do believe in more affordable housing in the context that it does fit in with that community," Smagala said. Affordable housing should be located in communities which have the social services to help families and where the schools are not overcrowded, he said.

Duplechin echoed Smagala's assessment about where affordable

housing should be built. "We definitely need more affordable housing. 50 is not a very high number," he said.

"I'm committed to exploring this. I think it's a real issue," Nugent said, adding that she would like to see more rental subsidies for seniors.

"We have to make sure people have the ability stay in their communities," Murphy said. "We have to take seriously people being priced out."

Five of the candidates said that they have been too focused on their own campaigns to determine whom they would support for mayor. They said that they would wait to make their decision until the presumed mayoral runoff election.

Duplechin said that his choice is Susana Mendoza because at an officer's funeral she stood with the rank and file officers instead of going inside with the top brass and city officials. "She waited outside with everybody else," he said. "I really respect her."

The 41st Ward candidates were asked about traffic impact that the "Touhy Triangle" project would have on the Edgebrook area.

A recent feasibility study examined the need for an influx of large retail, residential and entertainment development near Touhy and Lehigh avenues in Niles. Chicago primarily runs along the south side of Touhy, while the north side is predominantly Niles, except for a section of North Edgebrook.

Heneghan said that he would hold town hall meetings to discuss the concerns of the ward and then would advocate on behalf of the ward. "(Niles) would hear loud and clear what your concerns are," he said.

However, Heneghan cautioned that it could be a difficult task. "I don't know if I can stop Niles from doing what it wants to do," he said. "I'm not sure if we have a say in what's done in Niles."

Napolitano said that the project could worsen traffic congestion on Touhy but that he thinks the village will eventually with its "brother and sister neighborhood" to address the ward's concerns.

"We absolutely have a say in what Niles can do, (but) right now I don't support it. ... until they sit down with us and tell us how we can work together to make this project better," Napolitano said. "We already have that line of communications with Niles."

The candidates also were asked whether they agree or disagree with the decision by Alderman Danny Solis (25th) to record conversations for the FBI as part of an investigation into Alderman Ed Burke (14th).

"We need to root out the corruption, and we need to root out the insider politics," Smagala said. "People talk about a code of silence in city departments. I think the biggest one is City Council. Alderman Solis made a very tough decision that he is going to have to

live with. If it gets rid of corruption in the City of Chicago, I'm okay with the way he went about it."

"I assume he's wearing a wire not out of the goodness of his heart," Duplechin said. "There should be no reason to wear a wire and be involved in stuff like that."

"Public trust is sacred. Everyone who obtains an office swears an oath to maintain that public trust," Heneghan said. "Anything that roots out that corruption is okay with me."

"It shouldn't just be the police you're going after. It shouldn't just be the water department you're going after. It should just be the schools you're going after. Go after City Council. If you're doing something wrong, you do the time," Napolitano said.

"Look. I'm open. I'm ethical. I'm transparent," Nugent said. "If they're up to no good, they should get in trouble for it."

Murphy said that he found "unconscionable" the comments by aldermen who were more upset about a co-worker who wore a wire than the allegations facing Burke. "I don't know why anybody would support someone doing criminal activity," he said. "We have to maintain public trust. That's what you serve. That's what we all deserve."

Also at the forum, all of the six candidates voiced opposition to the expansion of charter schools in Chicago.

The following are some of the candidates' closing remarks:

Napolitano said that he kept his promise when elected in 2015 not to be a rubber-stamp for City Hall and that he voted against an "historic" property tax increase in 2016 despite threats from Mayor Rahm Emanuel that his vote could prevent Ebinger School from getting an annex. "Guess what? I called his bluff, and we still got that school because it was what was right," he said.

Heneghan said that his experience negotiating labor contracts for firefighters in Elmwood Park demonstrates his ability to "get things done" and that under his leadership the ward would have a more positive focus, citing the "ugliness" on social media in recent years. "If you elect me alderman of the 41st Ward, the healing will begin. The transparency will come through. You'll understand that it's not just rhetoric. It's someone who cares about each and everyone of you," he said.

Duplechin said that his experience in the army and subsequent career as a police officer have prepared him well to be an alderman and that he would fight for what the community wants. "I'm going to do the same thing and stand up for you guys and do



41ST WARD DEMOCRATIC Committeeman Tim Heneghan (left) is challenging incumbent Anthony Napolitano (right) for alderman in the 41st Ward. The candidates took part in a forum

Jan. 26 at Saint Mary of the Woods School, 7033 N. Moselle Ave.

Also part of the forum were candidates vying for alderman in the 39th Ward.

what's right," he said.

Smagala said that during the state budget impasse he had to cut the budget of the Albany Park Community Center, 5101 N. Kimball Ave., while at the same time finding new revenue sources in an effort to maintain services to the most at-risk families in the community. "That alone gives me more experience than my opponents combined," he said.

Murphy said that as committeeman he has "stood up to party bosses" and that as alderman he would be an independent voice in City Council. "What's really at stake in this race is we need leadership that listens, we need leadership that comes from the community. We have too many elected leaders who are funded from the same sources that come from our other elected leaders," he said.

Nugent said that as alderman she would always conduct herself in an open and transparent manner and that her career, including the management of large staffs, has prepared her to be an alderman. "I meet with thought leaders on both sides of the aisle. ... I can assure you that when I make a decision it's informed and responsible," she said.