

4th Ward Candidates Forum – Saturday 5, 2011, 10 a.m.
Sponsored by Coalition for Equitable Community Development
With Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference, OWL Illinois, Southside
Solidarity Network

Held at the Hyde Park Neighborhood Club as part of the CECD Annual Meeting. CECD President Pat Wilcoxon laid out the ground rules: Seating was in ballot order left to right. Present were candidates William D. “Will” Burns, Norman H. Bolden, Brian Scott, George Rumsey, and Lori S. Yokoyama. Not present: Miguést and Williams. Pat Wilcoxon was the moderator, Mark Granfors the timekeeper (with 30 second and stop signs). Each candidate would have one minute for opening remarks proceeding in ballot order. Each candidate would have one minute to respond to each of three questions from CECD, with the starting candidate for each question being the person to the left of the preceding speaker. Each candidate would have one minute for closing statements, going in reverse order. Linda Thisted would frame questions grouped from cards submitted by members of the audience.

Opening remarks.

Burns. Bio. Nobility of public service. Ward is known for tolerance, diversity, quirkiness. More progress is needed on crime, schools, taxes, leveraging diversity. He promises independent progressive politics, change the city budget and operation and brings legislative experience and proven leadership.

Scott. 9 years in the ward. Degrees, financial and technology experience; financial knowledge is needed. Owes nothing to donors but rather constituents. An independent voice.

Bolden. Life-long resident and son of a Chicago fireman. A businessman in the community-Room 43 and Norman’s Bistro. Worked under SETA at WGCI 25 years. Serving and connecting.

Rumsey. Long-time residency with U of C AM and 15 years of employment. Businessman. Hands on community involvement from organizations to projects that fixed things. Issues affordable housing, stores, schools, jobs, business.

Yokayama. Lawyer, MBA, has helped minority businesses. 19 years in the community—chose this community. Promotes diversity of many kinds. Concerned about taxes and that city gov’t has lost touch with the voice of the people, don’t listen. Likes mixed use housing and business.

Answers to three questions from CECD, posed by the moderator.

These are the questions.

1. [theme: Development in the Ward]

This past year Coalition worked with the 53rd Street Advisory Committee to create an open and interactive process for gathering community input into development decisions that helped guide the RFP process for the 53rd & Lake Park project. There are a number of important planned developments in the Ward – 53rd Street, Lake Meadows, Olympic Village site – to name a few. How will you ensure community input into these other

proposed developments in the ward? And will you work with the Coalition to replicate 53rd Street process throughout the ward? And will you commit to 20% affordable housing?

2. [theme: Preserving affordable housing]

The 4th Ward itself as being one of the most racially and economically diverse neighborhoods in the city. History shows us that gentrification often results in the displacement of long time residents. History also shows us that the way to prevent displacement is to preserve well-managed affordable rental housing through the community, and not concentrated in a few select areas. What policies – both city-wide and locally – will you pursue to preserve at-risk affordable housing?

3. [theme: Transportation]

The 4th Ward has a number of transportation challenges that impact the quality of life for our residents, especially those who rely on public transportation. A number of ideas have been proposed to improve public transportation, including the “Gold Line” (having more frequent service on the Metra Electric Line) and a light-rail system to handle east-west traffic. Where do you stand on these proposals and what will you do to improve public transportation in the 4th Ward?

Question 1, Development

Bolden. Committed to community input in any development – the community has to live with them. Prefers 30% affordable housing in developments. There needs to be a full assessment of what is said to be affordable housing in the ward and developments and whether the occupants qualify.

Scott. An alderman is a liaison. All developments, plans should be subject to a community impact (long term) assessment. Affordable housing is a high priority—it adds diversity.

Rumsey. Development planning begins at the community level. It must be sustainable—businesses that will last. A block by block inventory is needed. Development should be all through the ward. 30% affordable is right—in the development, not elsewhere.

Yokoyama. Opposes caps- why not 50%. Housing is a need of everyone. Input from everyone is needed. Agrees we don't bring in businesses that will shut down in a year. Services, resources, and information should be brought to residents, businesses. She relates to corporations.

Burns. Likes the 53rd St. process. TIFs should have councils. Has worked for Metropolitan Planning Council and will bring such expertise in. Affordable housing needs to be citywide, not just some places, and in all the 4th ward. Supports Sweet Home Chicago ordinance. Affordable means for everyday people.

Question 2, preserving affordable housing and discouraging displacement, everywhere and how.

Scott. Lake Crescent is as good model. The ordinance and more ways are needed, and it should be 20%.

Rumsey. Chicago is short 153,000 living units for people earning under \$20,000 a year. Under present trends, within 5 years Hyde Park will have lost its ability to house such folks. Lake Meadows redevelopment will bring up to triple the density and less affordable. We should use resources such as the Illinois Housing Development Authority low income credits.

Yokoyama. People are coming to the ward for more than just a roof over their head—we have to provide all that people expect. Eligibility needs a thorough scrutiny, we have to solve homelessness, we need mixes of income in proximity to give hope and example of a better life.

Burns. How to get people and development financing is a problem. Using the excess TIF funds would help. We need a reverse stream into these wards. We need to avoid re-concentrating low income people and rather help them to live close to jobs and throughout the city. Social services have to be brought to people, such as a community center at Oakwood Shores.

Bolden. Have to redefine what it is to pay to play. If a developer wants consideration and money, they have to build affordable housing. An assessment is needed but affordable housing must be as defined by the community.

Question 3, transportation

Rumsey. Supports the Gold Line and the Corridor study, but really needed is a comprehensive study of the transportation need. Pedestrian and bicycle access is important especially in developments. There IS a parking problem. Even the signage and spacing is inefficient.

Yokoyama. What's north of 47th needs study and strategy- best frequency, routes and coverage. Bikes fit into the picture but in conjunction with dealing with crime. We need to expand the el system.

Burns. Sponsored and funded the corridor study. Improve signage is needed, and bus trolley system. Best ways to get from A to B. Universal transit card.

Bolden. Improve what exists or restore what has been lost, such as reopening the 39th St. Metra station. Extend some bus routes, like #28 to 39th, a Drexel Corridor bus.

Scott. The more options the better including more stops. Universal cards. Gold line—beyond turn over the inner part to CTA.

Questions from the audience (submitted as cards to Linda Thisted, who grouped and read.

The aldermanic service office (6 consolidated). Staff transition, communications, continuation of special services such as city sticker sales and tax advice, snow removal, day to day handling of issues.

Yokoyama. Staff would be a family and any ONE would be expected to handle any issue.

Burns. Experience handling staffers and holding them accountable. It is their job. Snow—communicate with people!

Bolden. Run it like a business. Staff must be ready to deploy. “Make it go away.” Immediately.

Scott. Alderman is the leader and must get people who perform.

Rumsey. Competency. Alderman must lean the ward—attend the lsc and other meetings. Bring in those who can give people practical help. Use technology such as tracking and a good website. Of course I will keep the city sticker, tax advice et al.

The city’s fiscal health and how to fix it (3 consolidated)- “be specific”.

Burns. Contract oversight and elimination of sole-source contracting are essential. Eliminate extra layers of bureaucracy. Frontline services cannot be cut.

Bolden. Assessment of contracts and how money is spent. Too many layers.

Scott. City works for the wrong people. Can’t cut safety, education, or business development. Enact a transaction fee at Board of Trade.

Rumsey. Go to a grid system for services. Find some way to reverse the parking fiasco. Need a real budget process—zero based. Bids and contracts should have a 90 day publication.

Yokoyama. A real audit is needed- stop overspending. Practice long-term thinking. Solve the pension problem (defined contribution).

Elm Park as a park not a parking lot for Kimbark Plaza (4 consolidated).

Bolden- Keep; greenspace matters.

Scott. Keep.

Rumsey. Yes. If more is needed in other places, let them get it without giving up someone else’s. But parks need people to take care of them.

Yokoyama. Yes including needing people to keep them up.

Burns. Noncommittal. A green person who has arranged for money to the park district but other needs too. Needs a thorough community planning.

Schools- how to improve them, make younger children ready for high school and...

Scott. All neighborhood schools should be good. He would work with the principals to bring them resources. All need to work to change the funding- legislative.

Rumsey. Praise community wide efforts. Funding formula has to be changed. Parental involvement is needed / schools have to be made attractive to the parents of the area. Community members and local businesses also have to become involved.

Yokoyama. Overcrowding and high class size are big drawbacks. Consolidate where desirable and stop recycling white elephant buildings. Recognize that different children learn in different ways—there should be multiple career tracks.

Burns. Help LSCs and their financial resources and bring in leadership including more certified teachers – they aren't coming to our schools. The community school model should be grown-incentivize them, leverage resources. Reavis is a good model.

Bolden. It starts with the principals and the elementary kids. Do something about dumping grounds like Dyett, but why shouldn't Price kids be prepared go to King next door. Stop the divergent tracking of our kids. Instead bridge the gaps.

Jobs and Green Jobs.

Rumsey. Making known what training, jobs are available—the word has to go out about fairs. Need to find ways to reverse business disinvestment. Development has to get going, esp. Cottage Grove but also Michael Reese, 35th.

Yokoyama. Posting of jobs. Training sessions. Retail goes with jobs and has to be enticed in.

Burns. Weatherproofing jobs, he got laws passed taking advantage of what Congress passed. Hire in the community. Entrepreneurship.

Bolden. Opened a business that hired local people- replicate it. Boutique businesses; big boxes not for here.

Scott. Streamline the permit and rules problem; have waivers. Leverage the banks to loosen lending.

Seniors and aging in place with options

Yokoyama. Part of this is a healthcare problem, including lack of best equipment etc. in much of the area. A quick directory of resources would help.

Burns. There are state and city programs- keep them.

Bolden. Create cooperative programs including senior friendly housing and nursing facilities.

Scott. Get seniors and resources together.

Rumsey. Utilize and expand the village concept. Housing is an important part. Implement universal accessibility guidelines.

University of Chicago - discouraging its mistakes, encouraging its positive practices

Burns. Student but spent much time protesting its policies. UC needs transparency and process, needs to work to attract good people to come live here.

Bolden. They need to be neighbors and partners including in development.

Scott. The alderman has to push them on the greater needs.

Rumsey. The 800 pound gorilla forgets they and the community are often the same people and just as smart. He is not a basher of UC. A strong alderman backed by a strong community is needed.

Yokoyama. WE are a force that has to be reckoned with.

A city agenda for neighborhoods and neighborhoods working together.

Bolden. City, officials have to serve all, not corporations. Openness, not backdoor deals.

Scott. Too much money in play. Put in people who want to serve communities and not interests.

Rumsey. This is a pivotal election locally and citywide. Half the city council may change. We need independents reflecting the community. He would place campaign gifts from interests in a special fund. An inspector general should be over the council.

Yokoyama. Too much pay and play. This is our chance to make a difference. Require putting a percentage back into the wards. Community agreements.

Burns. Would join the progressive caucus in council. Endorsed by IVI etc. Organize to get what you want, but you have to know the rules and how to use them. Experience from the start.

Disabilities needs and discrimination and the 4th Ward

Scott. Businesses have to provide access and resources.

Rumsey. Organized a task force with the 5th ward office, went to the businesses.

Yokoyama. The laws are not being enforced. Hold departments accountable. Ald. Should help people file complaints and enforce repercussions.

Burns. Provide community based alternatives.

Bolden. Enforcement. Assess businesses to pay for compliance. TIFs could help.

TIF districts, what should they do?

Rumsey. 53rd's funds are committed. Cottage Grove has lots of potential—revitalize the streets, use small business funds. All TIFs need to be reviewed.

Yokoyama. There is a huge discrepancy between TIFs and which are in accord with the original intent. We need to bring the excess dollars into wards like ours. We need to enhance the whole ward.

Burns. Cottage Grove does need to be the first priority. Need to deal with no business wanting to be the first in.

Bolden. Use the TIFs for public safety, education, affordable housing. See if a TIF fits the needs, then design it to do so.

Scott. Use it bring in business development and jobs while being sensitive to the losses to CPS etc.

Closing statements

Yokoyama. I will be a leader and advocate and beholden to the community. I support economic development, safety (peace on the streets), housing, seniors.

Rumsey. I am honest, open and independent, a consensus builder, progressive, for retail and affordable healthcare and housing, services, and reforming the budget process.

Scott. The city is not working for us. For schools, global economy, economic development, against crime.

Bolden. Business development, education, public safety, meeting constituents' needs, know the woes of small businesses. Service.

Burns. Make sure the 4th ward hasn't been left out, elect a legislative insider.