

GAZETTE

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FREE

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Ribley departs from top job at Illinois Medical District. See page 21.



UIC and Rush med students rally for citizens' rights. See page 24.



Gazette's guide to Valentine's Day dining. See page 32.

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UI Health, Shriners partner for pediatric care. See page 20.

Meeting addresses Randolph Street crime problems. See page 22.

Gazette's mayoral, aldermanic endorsements. See page 28.

Three candidates seek 11th ward alderman seat; voters to choose for first time since '69

By Monica M. Walk

The 11th Ward aldermanic race has three candidates vying to fill the seat being vacated by 17-year veteran Alderman James A. Balcer. This is the first time since 1969 that the seat is open, as aldermen since then have been appointed to the seat and then often re-elected.

John Kozlar, currently completing a degree at John Marshall Law School, is a lifelong resident



of Bridgeport and president of the Canaryville Little League. He ran for alderman in 2011, the year he graduated from the University of Chicago, and was 1,255 votes away from a run-off with Balcer. He has pledged to give his aldermanic allowance to support seniors and

veterans and to donate \$25,000 of his salary to support ward schools and community organizations. See www.johnkozlar.com.

Maureen Sullivan is a lifelong Chicagoan who has lived all but a few years in Bridgeport, about which she authored the book *Images of America: Bridgeport*, and where she now operates a pet services company. She has a history of community activism, co-found-

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Crowded field in 25th Ward as four look to defeat Solis

By Miriam Y. Cintron

Four challengers are looking to unseat longtime Alderman Danny Solis in the 25th Ward, which includes portions of Pilsen, Chinatown, the West Loop, and Little Italy.

Ed Hershey, a science teacher at Lindblom Math and Science Academy, supports an elected school board and an end to charter schools, which he said should be folded back into the Chicago Public Schools system. Hershey said these schools should have local school councils and teachers who receive a full Chicago Teachers Union salary and benefits.



Regarding TIF districts and the City budget, Hershey said the entire system works as "Robin Hood in reverse—taking money from working people and handing it to the banks and corporations." According to Hershey, the TIF program "should be eliminated," with public funds going toward meeting communities' needs and "not those of large companies."

He also noted pension reform should not affect retirees who have "more than earned their pensions," explaining the City should address the pension prob-



Ed Hershey.

lem by getting money back from corporations, such as Boeing and

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Bey, Burns, Bolden vie for 4th Ward aldermanic seat

By Jennifer Nunez

Two opponents are challenging current alderman of the 4th Ward William Burns this year. Candidates Tracey Bey and Norman Bolden, along with Alderman Burns, will be on the ballot on Feb. 24 when residents will choose to stick with the status quo or shake things up with a new representative.

Tracey Bey, a mortgage broker and loan originator, says the tax increment financing (TIF) program is broken and needs an



overhaul.

"The TIF program was originally created to bring development to blighted communities and create economic opportunities by creating development and jobs," she said. "There needs to be more accountability, more openness, and more transparency of how our TIF dollars are being allocated."

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Tracey Bey.

Three candidates seek 11th ward alderman seat; open for first time since 1969

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ing Save the Ramova and helping to start Bridgeport Alliance, the Bridgeport Business Association, and the Palmisano Park Advisory Council, of which she is president. In 2014, she was elected to the McClellan Elementary School Council. See www.sullivan-11thward.com.

Patrick Daley Thompson grew up in Bridgeport. He is an attorney focusing on real estate and municipal finance. In 2012, he was elected a commissioner of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District. He is a board member and past president of the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence, director and former president of the Valentine Boys and Girls Club, board member and director of the South Loop Chamber of Commerce, and board member of the Historic Chicago Bungalow Association. See www.patrickdthompson.com.

Business revitalization

Concerning revitalizing the Halsted and 35th Street business area, Kozlar said he would look at Morgan Street, too, noting he wants to use tax increment financing (TIF) funds "to spend \$1.4 million of that money on Morgan



Street and redirect \$3 million to Halsted Street, which has nothing now for families, to the Ramova Theater and a new bowling alley. If we build it up—more jobs, more opportunities—people will want to live there."

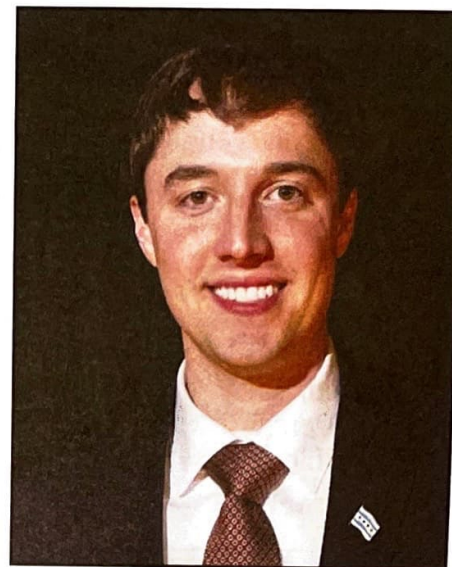
Sullivan said, "I want to develop it along the lines of Clark Street in Andersonville, which caters to the residents there. I am supportive of small business and developing relationships with retailers."

Thompson said, "We need to look at zoning to attract pedestrians. Entertainment—opening restaurants—will generate other retail. We have TIF dollars that we can invest in infrastructure and streetscapes. I want to make street art from old bridge pieces, create bumpouts to make the street pedestrian friendly."

Newman Center

The John Paul II Newman Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago wanted to build a dormitory on Union Street, but Balcer did not approve a zoning change.

Concerning the Newman Center building a dormitory, Kozlar said, "I want to sit down



John Kozlar.

with the community to see what citizens want and determine the pros and cons from there." Sullivan said, "I believe a different location may be better. Many residents had concerns about a tall tower development there." Thompson said, "I'm not doing anything. I don't represent the Newman Center. They presented their case, and there was concern about the location being an appropriate location for a college dorm; that was addressed, and Newman Center declined to close on the property."

Heliport

Workers are building a heliport at 24th Street and Halsted,

and Kozlar noted, "The decision was made without input from the community. I can see it will affect quality of life and people will leave if their quality of life is down."

Sullivan said, "I feel for those people" living nearby. "I would like to see a timetable: how many jobs will it bring to the neighborhood? What are the plans to bring tourists to the ward and businesses? I want to be sure it respects the neighbors."

"I was against the heliport at that location and told the alderman," Thompson said. "The operator has reached out to the community. I commend them for trying to be a good neighbor. We do have to watch for quality of life issues and be sure they honor commitments, like quieter helicopters and flying over the river and expressway and not residences."

TIF reform

"TIF is being abused," Kozlar said. "Five hundred thousand dollars were spent on signs in Canaryville and Bridgeport. We don't need to be reminded where we live." TIF funds "have to be used for something people can go to, spent in a positive way," he added.

"There is over a \$1 billion TIF



surplus, and I would love to see it redistributed to this community; \$5 million from this ward was ported out and we don't know where it has gone," Sullivan said. "McClellan School was slated to close—there was money in TIF but it was not used to support the school. The message to children is that we don't care. This is outrageous."

"TIFs in the 11th Ward can be a tremendous tool to help revitalize parts of the community," Thompson said. "Some really help public infrastructure. Parks and playgrounds in the 11th ward have been revitalized; the Morgan streetscape revitalized retail." He noted the question needs to be asked, "When the City creates a district, does that area need it?"

Budget, pension deficits

With the City facing budget and pension deficits, Kozlar said, "I am adamant not to raise property taxes. The City needs to increase the special event money they get and get more events. I am a proponent of a casino near downtown that will generate income."

"Going bankrupt as a city is not impossible—look at Detroit—and contracts are void in a bankruptcy," Kozlar continued. "I don't want our City employees to go through that. The pension fund will be depleted in ten years. These are not made up numbers. I have

experience running a budget. I have rejuvenated the Little League budget from zero to a profit."

Sullivan said, "Retirees and employees were promised a package when they were hired—and their salaries are not as high when you have a good benefits package. To put this on the backs of workers is not acceptable to me. I'm a regular person, blue collar—my father worked for Peoples Gas for 40 years."

"People deserve their pensions," she added. "I oppose a property tax increase because this puts it on the backs of regular people. The City's budget has a lot of waste going on. There must be a way to coordinate with the major utilities to get work done—not to repair a street and have it torn up again. I would support a commuter tax to cover the [budget] deficit; people from the suburbs come into the City to work and use resources."

"I don't think property taxes are the answer," Thompson said. "A new casino generates fresh revenues; we have to look at that. Commuters work and people come into the city and utilize city services and streets—perhaps a sales tax change, maybe on purchases over \$100 or \$200 pay an additional few dollars."

He noted the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District is "a model: we got our pension done



Maureen Sullivan.

three years ago. You have to prioritize and have discipline to make the payments."

Schools

Concerning an elected Chicago Public Schools board, Kozlar said, "We need more representation of teachers and parents." Sullivan said, "Our current board is hand-picked by the mayor, rubber stamped. We need people from local school councils with intimate knowledge, who know the principals and what goes on daily. I want an elective school board."

"I am open to that idea," Thompson said. "Right now, I support appointment by the mayor, but I understand other concerns. But it wouldn't happen until 2017,

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Three candidates seek 11th ward alderman seat; open for first time since 1969

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and we have three years when we need to help children learn and continue their education."

When asked about charter schools, Kozlar said, "Teachers in my community have 30-35 kids in class. That's ridiculous; to teach and discipline is a burden. We need to reduce class size to 24-25. I am in agreement with no more firing of good teachers, and protection of pensions.

"I don't think this is the point of time to get into the business of profit-making in education," Kozlar added. "That's not right. If an area has no available school, we need to sit down with the community" and get a CPS school.

Sullivan said, "We closed 50 schools, and a map with charter schools mirrors where the closing happened. A charter is private, money goes in and you can't trace it. It is horrible if we let a corporation dictate what children should be learning."

Thompson noted, "We don't have any [charter schools] in the 11th Ward. I believe in local schools. We need to invest in local schools. We also have tremendous Catholic schools in the ward. We need to invest in infrastructure. People had felt charters were a solution, and results are showing

they are not what they say."

Crime issues

To fight crime, Kozlar would encourage people not joining gangs by working for increased job opportunities. "I will advocate for more police on the street, and volunteers in the C.A.P.S. program. But, to hire more police we have to take care of the budget."

Sullivan said, "I am a member of the Bridgeport Citizens Group, founded by people on a street known for random violence. At a meeting last year, there were ten gunshots outside. The police asked, 'Why do you live here?'"

"People who are willing to move into high crime areas should be worked with closely by the alderman," she added. "These are people taking their time and should be honored with a seat at the table. We should encourage more citizen involvement in high crime areas; they know who the players are. Mayor [Rahm] Emanuel has hired [police] for attrition, but not need. To pay for this, we'll have to look at the current budget to figure it out."

"Absolutely, I think we need additional police," Thompson said. "It is a financial issue. We have to address the pension issue first and foremost and get on a



path to recovery. Then, see how to add additional police. Hiring is a 20- to 30-year commitment."

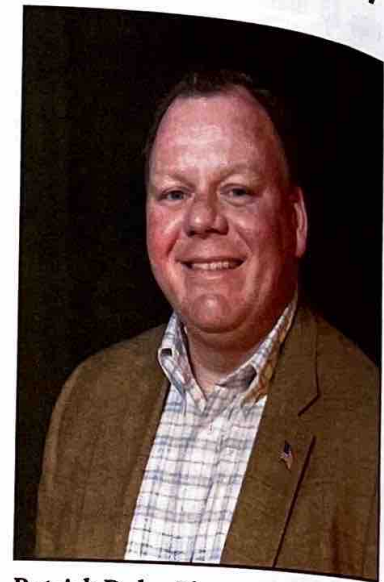
New initiatives

Kozlar would create a Citizen Assistance Computer System. "A call to my ward office will be plugged into a color-coded system: blue for a new call; red, if not completed and after two weeks, I will check on it; green, when taken care of." He also would hold more community meetings and create a job postings system in which resumes can be uploaded and "you can just click and apply," he said. "We want to employ people from the ward."

"There are good people in the ward who want to make it better," Kozlar said. "I want to make the ward office efficient, and my economic development will bring livelihood to the neighborhood."

"We are four-to-five miles from downtown," Sullivan noted. "How have we not developed to serve the community? We need businesses to serve the everyday needs of the people who live here."

"One of my biggest projects, close to my heart, is the redevelop-



Patrick Daley Thompson.

opment of the Ramova Theater," Sullivan said. "Ten years ago, I started a petition to not knock it down. You can't replace it; it's a 1,000 foot performance space. The current alderman hadn't gone in since the City took ownership. There is a good chance it could make the neighborhood blossom."

"We have to get functioning trash collection in the business district on Halsted," she added. "Other wards have people pick up garbage and clean graffiti every Saturday; it could be done monthly. The ward is crying out for a dog park."

Thompson noted that, as alderman, his job would be to pro-

REDUCE YOUR PROPERTY TAXES

vide services such as public safety and schools “to attract young families. Then, we have quality of life and economic redevelopment. The 11th Ward is typically very safe, and I will continue to work to keep it safe.

“Thirty-fourth and 35th Streets are where we want to focus new businesses and restaurants. Farther north in Pilsen, there is the great feel of galleries but no corner store to walk to. I’m on the board of the South Loop Chamber of Commerce, and we want to connect the University [of Illinois at Chicago] district and Pilsen to do events together, maybe with a trolley service.”

“There is so much potential for the community,” Kozlar said. “I don’t want to let it go to waste. I am running to make the community a better place and stay a human being, not a politician. Growing up, I hated when politicians don’t say how they are going to do things, so I put in-depth specifics on my website.”

“I grew up here,” Sullivan said. “the last ten years I’ve done a variety of service and volunteer work.

“During the 2008-11 crash, I watched as friends, neighbors, and myself struggled,” Sullivan said. “There were no foreclosure workshops, no job fairs, no coordination with local businesses hiring, no communication from the ward office. It’s a service office.

When we do volunteer work, we are treated like we are bothering them. Old-time, regular people who live here feel disconnected. I never thought I’d run for alderman, but I thought, ‘This isn’t right.’ We need to recognize and encourage volunteers.”

“My passion for the people and community,” is the reason he is running, Thompson said. “I’ve lived here my whole life,” Thompson added. “I’ve always been involved in the neighborhood. Public service is a very rewarding career and commitment, to be involved where you affect change. “My program is all about service: we will log your name and concern and will call you back. We will be more proactive. We will change hours to be more responsive, open one night a week and Saturday morning. It all comes back to service. I want to continue to make it a terrific community.”

YOUR VOTE COUNTS!
Get to the Polls and
Exercise Your Right
to Vote on Tuesday,
February 24.