

Progressive Committee Identifies Questions for Council Candidates

by Kaitlyn Cupelli

The Progressive Candidate Forum Committee met at the New Deal Café on Thursday, October 10, to discuss low voter turnout for Greenbelt city council elections, the lack of coverage on progressive issues and the disconnect felt between different parts of Greenbelt.

The committee planned a well-attended Candidate Forum for a Progressive Greenbelt in 2017. However, this year they have opted to use a more focused set of four questions (see box) for the candidates to answer to be shared with progressive coalition members and the entire Greenbelt community.

Low voter turnout among residents was clearly a hot topic for the night and something that the committee felt strongly about. Out of the roughly 23,000 residents in Greenbelt, there were a total of 2,569 voters in the 2017 council election.

“We only have a small number of people participating in the process. That means decisions are being made without the input of all the people who live here,” Aileen Kroll, of the Center for Dynamic Community Governance (CDCG), said.

Reasons given for this low voter turnout include council elections being held in odd years, as well as an overall disconnect that people may have with the city as a whole.

As an example, Kroll cited data gathered when the CDCG received a one-year grant to work with the people of Greenbriar. She spoke to people who had lived in Greenbelt for over 30 years, yet had no idea what was going on in central Greenbelt.

In order to break down these barriers, the people of Greenbriar asked for the city to provide a bus and a tour guide to show them around central Greenbelt. The city agreed and was very responsive to the request being made.

Kroll believes that projects such as the one in Greenbriar help people feel more connected and engaged with Greenbelt. These same people are now able to visit and volunteer at places such as the New Deal Café and the Old Greenbelt Theatre.

“If you want more people to vote, you have to make them feel like this is their commu-

nity. We’re asking city council to be a part of that discussion in meaningful, concrete ways,” Kroll said.

The candidates said the questions they were asked are important because they requested specific answers to problems, as well as ways to bring Greenbelt together.

Katie Pugliese of the Greenbelt Racial Equity Alliance (GREA) said she first joined GREA because she wanted a way to be involved with the police department.

“I wanted to make sure to be involved with our police department. To make sure they were being held accountable. You can’t hold people responsible unless there’s transparency,” Pugliese said.

Trent Leon-Lierman, of CASA de Maryland said that rent control is the only all-encompassing way to support the community in gaining affordable housing. He also spoke about some of the

harsh realities that Greenbelt residents may have to face in terms of housing.

“People are having to work side jobs. We have people living in two-bedroom apartments, renting out one of the bedrooms to families so that they can afford it,” Leon-Lierman said. “We also see an increase in conditions worsening, as a result of the physical population of apartments and an overall lack of keeping up with the apartment complexes.”

Overall, the candidates believe it’s crucial for councilmembers to represent all of Greenbelt and to have discussions about all of the issues that residents may be facing.

“Greenbelt is an awesome community,” Kroll said. “And the things we’re talking about are to make it more so. There’s so much good here and we want to make sure we maximize on the good, as well as address that which can be better.”

Progressive Candidate Forum Questions

Here are the four questions submitted to candidates for Greenbelt City Council from the Progressive Candidate Forum Committee. Candidate responses are due back by noon on Saturday, October 19.

Questions:

1. Our great city has a wonderful history of being progressively green, but much of the resources and projects have focused on historic Greenbelt. Specifically, how would you identify, focus attention, and commit resources to ensure the inclusion of East and West Greenbelt in future green projects? Would you be in support of a Greenbelt-only shuttle or circulator that uses electric or hybrid mini-buses or vans?
2. Affordable housing is an issue in Greenbelt. Takoma Park has a rent stabilization policy designed to preserve the city’s affordable housing stock and maintain economic and ethnic diversity by controlling the frequency and amount of rent increases that may be imposed by a landlord. Do you support a rent control policy to keep rent more affordable in Greenbelt? Why or why not?
3. The recent police shooting and killing of Leonard Shand in Hyattsville raises concerns about police accountability and transparency. These concerns extend to community interest in and questioning of police department policies around rules of engagement, use of force, requirements for de-escalation, use of military-style equipment, chain-of-command protocol when more than one jurisdiction is responding, and on-scene use of mental health professionals. What specific actions and policy changes do you propose to ensure accountability and transparency within the Greenbelt Police Department?
4. For a democracy to thrive, citizens must be actively engaged. Both paltry voting numbers for city council and small attendance at council meetings suggest that important governance issues are being decided by a minority of Greenbelters. What specific steps do you plan to take to increase the involvement of Greenbelters in all sectors of the city in matters that directly affect their lives, health, well-being and pocketbooks?

Goldberg-Strassler Named Sports Broadcaster of the Year

by Fatemeh Paryavi



PHOTO COURTESY OF BALLPARK DIGEST

Jesse Goldberg-Strassler, 2019 MiLB Broadcaster of the Year

Jesse Goldberg-Strassler, former Greenbelter and broadcaster of Lansing Lugnuts, received the 2019 Broadcaster of the Year award.

Goldberg-Strassler is the author of The Baseball Thesaurus and The Football Thesaurus and the award winner of the 2013 Midwest League Broadcaster award.

In 2004, Goldberg-Strassler interviewed for several teams at the winter meetings and was hired as a pre-game/post-game operator

for the Brockton Rox in the Can-Am League. Since 2009, he has been at Lansing Lugnuts, according to an article by Jarah Wright.

Dan Shulman, ESPN/Sportsnet, comments on Goldberg-Strassler’s website that “Jesse is a pleasure to listen to. His love for baseball and for calling a game comes across in his work. He is as easy to get along with as he is to listen to. Combine that with all the young broadcasters he has mentored over the years, and Jesse brings a lot to our industry.”



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