

October 14, 2009

"Lunch with the League: A Conversation with the Mayoral Candidates"

16 members attended.

Mayoral candidates Setti Warren and Ruth Balser took questions, with Sharyn Roberts moderating.

Topics discussed included:

- Finance:
 - o zero-based vs. performance-based criteria for municipal and school departments,
 - o not separating the needs of the city vs. the schools,
 - o creative partnering with the non-profits, i.e., the colleges and the hospital (payments in lieu of taxes, services in lieu of taxes, etc.)
 - o making use of grants both public and private especially since funds from the state are lessening at an alarming rate,
 - o long range budget and performance planning, 5-10 years out, with benchmarks,
 - o user fees, pay-as-you-throw, exemptions for low-income, charging for behavior Newton wants to discourage.
- Transportation, including:
 - o bicycle safety and balancing road needs with automobiles,
 - o Looking comprehensively at transportation so each village has a system that works
- Development:
 - o balancing smart growth with village needs,
 - o working to be pro-active with development, not just reacting to proposals
- Trust in city government (or the lack thereof)
 - o transparency in government,
 - o responsiveness in government, making use of the 311 call system and data tracking of citizens' requests and complaints and if/how they've been resolved,
- Rebuilding city infrastructure
 - o taking inventory of municipal buildings and using them to their best purpose,
 - o making villages/retail areas walkable, promoting in-fill development
 - o handicapped accessibility to all public buildings especially schools (which are also used as polling places),
 - o taking a good look at the branch libraries and their role in the respective villages.
 - o Reaching out to new volunteers for city boards and commissions, using the League study from 1992 to determine whether boards and commissions are functioning well.

Setti: "There are going to be groups that disagree with me. When the mayor puts out a plan, a few folks can't hold it up."

Ruth: "there is only one reason people vote to raise their taxes; they have complete confidence in the numbers. It will take time to get there."

Both candidates said that they enjoyed the informal atmosphere.