

news

Community meets with candidates in upcoming election

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Dozens of community members gathered at the Ashland Kroc Center on Feb. 10 to listen to the candidates for the upcoming primary election speak about their campaigns and future plans. The Ashland Area Chamber of Commerce hosted the event in order to bring together community members and local political figures, in hopes that questions would be answered. With voting for the primary election coming just around the corner on March 17, the candidates took the opportunity to meet with community members individually before and after the event.

Judge of the Ohio District 5 Court of Appeals
Jeff Furr - Republican



TOM E. PUSKAR, ASHLAND TIMES-GAZETTE

Furr is going into the primary race unopposed, and will face his Democratic opponent, William Hoffman, late this fall in the general election. His previous experience with politics started with him serving on Johnstown City Council, and led to his campaigns for candidacy in the Ohio State Senate, District 31, Ohio State House of Representatives, District 71 and again he attempted in 2012 for a seat for District 68.

His educational history began with his degree from Ohio State University and later he pursued a law degree from Capital University, leading him to his interest in judgeship where he has been in private practice for 20 years.

Furr spoke about the importance of voting and commented on being the “vote of reason.”

“My role is to always vote by conscious, so that I can sleep well at night and I did that every time.”

Municipal Income Tax Renewal

Matt Miller, Mayor of Ashland, spoke at the event on the municipal income tax renewal for street repair and resurfacing, which is a five-year renewal.

If the levy is renewed, Miller believes it will “create a cycle for road repairs that would allow more timely repairs to all its roadways.”

“With the money that the tax has generated so far, by [residents] stepping forward and supporting the levy, we have been able to resurface approximately 56 lane miles.”

With more support for the levy, Miller expects to resurface more of the 220 lane miles that are in Ashland in order to improve driving conditions and to get the roads in better shape.

Court of Common Pleas Judge, Probate & Juvenile Division

Karen DeSanto Kellogg - Republican



“The number one role that I am going to have in that court is to run an efficient court, who is always there everyday to do the people’s work,” Kellogg said. “And doing the people’s work in this capacity means doing it in a prompt, timely and efficient manner.”

Scheduling cases, treating people with respect and making prompt decisions all fall into the roles of the job as judge, Kellogg added in her speech. Her mission is to move children and families along through the court and make important decisions that will reflect positively on the court.

Kellogg has over 18 years of experience as an attorney, and began her career as an assistant prosecutor. According to her Facebook page, Kellogg, “has previously served as a Board Member and Chair of the Appleseed Community Mental Health Board and is the current Secretary of the Ashland Parenting Plus Board.”

Her end goal is to create a culture of open communication and working together.

David M. Hunter - Republican



Hunter is currently an attorney in Loudonville after graduating from Ashland University (Ashland College at the time), and earning his law degree from the Toledo College of Law.

He currently resides in Perrysville.

Hunter has been involved in the practice of law for 23 years, and served as Assistant Law Director in Ashland for many years.

One of the issues he brought up was the timeliness of the cases that the judge oversees. Cases take longer to get to the court in Ashland county, and this puts children and families at risk of separation or prolonged neglect. The juvenile court needs to be more timely because they are the faces representing children and families.

Joseph P. Kearns, Jr. - Republican



“My roots start in Ashland and my love is in Ashland,” Kearns said.

Starting out in Ashland, Kearns and his family have impacted the community with various businesses and community projects.

Kearns, after graduating from Ashland High, attended Ohio State University, class of 1989. He later earned his law degree in Omaha, NE. before moving back to his starting place.

After opening his firm next to his parent’s shop called “The Nook,” Kearns used his law degree for more than 25 years before running for the position of juvenile and probate judge.

“I’ve always wanted to look out for the best interest of the chil-

dren,” he said.

He commented on the importance and seriousness of the role as judge for children. After researching and studying the child’s history, Kearns said, he would have to make a report to the court and determine what he believes would be in the best interest of the child, while respecting the rights of the parents.

State Representative - Ohio House District 70
Kevin Barnet - Democrat



Barnet has been in Ohio for 24 years, after he moved from Long Island, New York, where he spent all of his life beforehand. He started off working at a gas utility company in New York, and then got involved in management, until he and his family moved to Ohio to open a bed and breakfast.

“I believe there are still things that we all can agree on, that we all still believe. I believe we all want to do the right thing for our family,” Barnet said. “I think we all want to send our kids to good schools, we want to raise them in safe neighborhoods. We want to breathe clean air and drink clean water. We want to know that the next medical emergency we have isn’t going to end in a bankruptcy.”

Barnet focused his five minutes on the role of government and how the role of government should not be looking after their own self-interests and big corporations, it should be focused on the people.

Darrell Kick - Republican



Kick was born and raised in Loudonville, Ohio and began his speech commenting on his value of family.

He began his political career as a congressional staffer for Congressman Bob Gibbs, which he remained at for around six years. Following the staff position with Gibbs, he started his journey by running for State Representative, and was a Field Representative.

“Some of the things that interest me the most are the foster care and adoption situations that we’ve had,” Kick said.

Two other topics he deemed, “of interest to him,” were veterans and broadband.

The adjustment from military to civilian life is difficult, and he spoke about wanting to be able to help out in situations to make the transition easier.

Broadband remained a powerful topic all the way through because of the farmland surrounding the county.

Kick pointed out more specifically the schools and families around do not have good internet.

State Senator - Ohio District 22

Cory Branham - Republican



Branham paced the floor as he gave his ideas for the future of Ohio’s District 22.

Branham claims that he is going to “lead this movement” for Ashland. Branham has been an Ohio resident since birth and expresses his love for the state. His passions include faith and family and claims he is all about the small town feel. One of his goals expressed in his statement was to have regular town hall meetings and attend those meetings himself.

As a republican, Branham stays true to the conservative ideals. He expressed that he is in support of full healthcare transparency as well as pro-second amendment, which he explains reflects back on to his childhood growing up with firearms and on to his experience in the military.

Being a former veteran shaped other areas of his campaign, such as his emphasis on veteran care. He explains how there are 23 suicides a day due to PTSD among former veterans and says he wishes to decrease that with his plans for better funding in care for veterans and their families.

As an educator he wants to emphasize the importance of the public school system. He also wants to be proactive in helping the economy and believes that we should see at least 30,000 jobs a year.

Ron Falconi - Republican



Falconi began his statement by providing his audience with background on his Philipino heritage. One of his major selling points was that he traveled across the country to support and talk to the Asian-American community about conservative values under the Trump administration.

Falconi claims to believe that in today’s political climate, conservative values are under attack. He explains that he would like to instill conservative views such as, pro-life, pro-second amendment, pro-conceal carry and pro-business in his candidacy.

Timothy Hoven - Republican



Hoven is an ordinary citizen from Northern Medina County. He has no professional political experience.

“Politicians don’t create jobs, they drive them away,” Hoven said.

Hoven claims that he is getting involved because of his wish to

keep his four-year-old grandson in Ohio. He commented that the schools are good in Ashland “for now,” but should be preparing to see similar issues that bigger city schools are dealing with in the future—such as higher drug rates.

He explained to the audience that current lawmakers are focusing on the wrong things.

One point that he made was about the unnecessary worry that the government has regarding 18-year-olds buying cigarettes. If they are able to fight for their country, they should be able to buy both cigarettes and alcohol, Kearns said.

Hoven has been talking with Ashland citizens and said that we need to address both the growing drug problem and work on getting-up-to-date with technology as other counties are doing.

Hoven gave out his cellphone number at the end of his speech because he wants to talk first-hand with people, and that, he said, is his preferred mode of communication.

Steve Johnson - Democrat



Johnson was the second of the two democrats to speak. His main takeaway was to help give everyone the same opportunities he was lucky enough to have.

He spoke of fighting for more funding for concerning areas like education, environment and healthcare.

During his statement he commented on how Ohio is one of the worst states for college affordability. This was a statistic he would like to change.

Johnson claimed that his campaign focused on putting the people first and staying true to the American way.

“I won’t be corrupted.”

Mark Romanchuk - Republican



Romanchuk opened with the statement, “Ashland is making a comeback.”

Romanchuk is a Republican Navy veteran and retired engineer. He expressed throughout his speech that he is pro-life, pro-second amendment and conceal carry, and pro-business. The main issue he expressed was jobs. Specifically American jobs. He explained that 188,000 jobs are going unfilled. He also talked of new energy policies and spending money wisely.

A major takeaway from Romanchuk was that he wants to get up close and personal with the public. One of the promises he made was if a community member has an issue or concern he promises to meet with them one-on-one rather than having a large town hall meeting.

PHOTOS TAKEN BY AVAERIE FITZGERALD UNLESS OTHERWISE CITED.

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