

Ward 2 candidates discuss issues at forum

BY DUSTIN LUCA
Staff Writer

SALEM — Don't be offended if you didn't get an invitation.

More than a half-dozen neighborhood groups teamed up with the League of Women Voters of Salem to hold a quickly assembled Ward 2 candidates forum at Hawthorne Hotel Tuesday night.

The event, coming together in the final leg of the preliminary voting season, prohibited public attendance and was witnessed only by Salem Access TV, a couple

members of neighborhood groups and League of Women Voters organizers, and The Salem News. The forum was also filmed, to be aired on SATV before the election, and it was broadcast live on Facebook by the League. It was moderated by Wicked Local reporter William Dowd.

The event came five days before a preliminary election in Salem will narrow overloaded fields for Mayor and Wards 1, 2, 4 and 7 on Sept. 14. It was the second forum held by the League of Women Voters, with a Ward 1 forum on Tuesday drawing a modest crowd to Salem Waterfront Hotel.

The event Thursday night moved quickly, with the candidates — Armand Blanchette, Caroline Watson-Felt, and James Zavaglia — commonly leaving time on the table and at times providing an entire response in less than 15 seconds.

For that, it hit on a lot — everything from fixing the affordable housing crisis to getting city councilors to play nice.

“Right now there's all kinds of stuff going on with the Council, and not just with them but the mayor,” Blanchette said. “We have a common goal — make Salem a great place

See **ISSUES**, Page 3

ISSUES

■ Continued from Page 1

to live and raise your family. You always need to have that in the back of your head.”

Watson-Felt followed, highlighting the tension between councilors that occasionally derailed City Council meetings before the pandemic.

“It comes with a lot of ire around the tone or tenor that certain councilors talk to other councilors with,” Watson-Felt said. “It’s incredibly important to hold our municipal authorities accountable for what isn’t truthful, respectful.”

Zavaglia focused on a recent petition from residents to encourage the writing of a wetlands protection ordinance, which has remained in committee while city officials work an official process internally.

“A lot of people are really, really up in arms about that, because they felt that 1,900 people... their voice doesn’t matter,” Zavaglia said. “Some people are also talking about getting a recall petition for some of the councilors, thinking they need to be a little more civil.”

Salem Common was a frequent topic in the event, with one question resurrecting the Haunted Happenings carnival debate that raged surrounding the Common a few years ago.

“If they want to do anything, it should be very small,” Zavaglia said. “Also, if the Common Association wants it and the people want it around there, they could just vote on whether they want it or not.”

Blanchette followed, referencing the carnival when it was on the then-named “carnival lot” — now Forten Park — and how that served children on Halloween night.

“It should be that the residents vote on it, and whoever is the representative (on City Council for Ward 2) should back them up,” Blanchette said. “Me personally, I’d like to see something scaled down so the kids have something to do on Halloween.”

Watson-Felt, meanwhile, pushed that before anything



DUSTIN LUCA/Staff Photo

It was a quiet night for the League of Women Voters of Salem’s second preliminary election forum this week, with a forum held at Hawthorne Hotel without an audience or live broadcast to TV. It was taped, to be aired before the election, and broadcast live on Facebook.

is allowed on the Common, that a fully written and implemented master plan makes maintenance proactive rather than reactive.

“I’d be hesitant to support a large-scale carnival,” she said, “unless I felt there was absolute funding, committed funding and resources, that there would be enforcement

and a maintenance plan put into immediate action to fix whatever damage is done to that land.”

To respond to this story or suggest another, contact Dustin Luca at 978-338-2523 or DLuca@salemnews.com. Follow him at [facebook.com/dustinluca](https://www.facebook.com/dustinluca) or on Twitter @DustinLucaSN.

GIANT COMMUNITY YARD SALE



**WHEN: SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2021
10 AM – 1 PM**

**WHERE: 265 ESSEX STREET, BEVERLY, MA
FOLLOW THE DRIVEWAY THROUGH
THE PARKING LOT TO THE BACK LAWN
BEHIND CAREONE AT ESSEX PARK**

**WHO: OPEN TO THE PUBLIC – NO ENTRANCE
FEE – PLENTY OF FREE PARKING**

**Multiple tables and sellers • Come find that rare
treasure • Great Deals • Good community fun.
Outside event.**



If you have any questions about the event, you may reach out to Stacey Robinson at SRobinson@care-one.com or 978-816-0557.