

At-large forum brings Council race to RCC

Yawu Miller

To hear it from the nine candidates running for the four at-large seats on the City Council, each supports affordable housing, improved schools and efforts to stem violence.

But when eight of those candidates came to Roxbury Community College last Thursday night to meet voters from the black, Latino, Cape Verdean and Asian communities, stark differences emerged in the details.

Asked whether they would support legislation affirming tenants groups' rights to collective bargaining with landlords, the incumbent councilors split along racial lines.

"I was part of that vote," said Felix

Incumbent councilors Michael Flaherty and Stephen Murphy found themselves defending their "no" votes on the collective bargaining vote before the people of color in attendance.

"It had the dangerous potential to force developers to build less affordable housing," Flaherty said, noting that he tried to broker a compromise between the tenants and property owners.

Explaining his "no" vote, Murphy echoed the arguments against the measure put forth by the other eight white councilors.

"I thought it could have had a pernicious effect on the production of affordable housing," he said.

But Sam Yoon, who sponsored the measure, cited his experience as a developer of affordable housing working for the Asian Community Development Corporation in arguing that tenant collective bargaining would not at all affect the production of af-

fordable housing.

All but one of the other council candidates at the forum voiced support for collective bargaining: David James Wyatt, a newspaper deliverer and president of the Academy Homes Tenant Council.

"I don't know if it's possible for a business to be held accountable to a tenant group," he said, adding that people who cannot afford to live in Boston should move out.

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City Council candidate William Estrada (second from left) makes a point as Felix Arroyo (left) looks on during last Thursday's at-large forum. Also pictured are Michael Flaherty, Matthew Geary, Marty Hogan and Stephen Murphy. (Yawu Miller photo)

Arroyo, who was lead sponsor of a failed rent stabilization bill in 2004. "I felt it was too little."

The legislation, which gained the support of the four councilors of color and Back Bay/Fenway Councilor Mike Ross, was seen as a measure to protect tenants of large, privately-owned buildings from large rent increases.

The measure stands as a wedge issue that divides voters of color and white progressives from conservative white voters.



Mayor Thomas M. Menino (center) took part in the American Cancer Society's "Making Strides for Breast Cancer" Walk on Sunday. Menino and the Boston Public Health Commission launched the Pink and Black Campaign to draw attention

to disparities in breast cancer survival rates between black and white women. More than 40,000 walkers took part in the event, raising more than \$3.25 million for breast cancer research. (Photo courtesy of City of Boston Mayor's Office)



Presidential hopeful Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., waits patiently for someone to answer the door during a neighborhood canvas in Des Moines, Iowa, on Saturday, Oct. 13, 2007.

Obama's campaigning heavily in rural Iowa in preparation for the state's January's caucuses. For more campaign coverage turn to pg. 7. (AP photo/Kevin Sanders)

Red tape putting Chelsea education agency in bind

Brian Wright O'Connor

CHELSEA, Mass. — An award-winning Upward Bound program with a 40-year record of providing a pathway to college for thousands of low-income students is facing an imminent shutdown over a disputed grant application.

Choice Thru Education, launched in the early days of the War on Poverty, provides federally funded tutoring, mentoring, college visits and application assistance to children of the Bay State's poorest city.

In November 2006, Choice electronically filed a \$320,000 grant-re-

newal application, amounting to 80 percent of the program's budget over a four-year funding cycle. A computer glitch kicked back the application, so Choice then re-filed after federal officials extended the deadline.

Susan S. Clark, founding director of the Chelsea agency, said she was shocked when the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) turned them down in spite of extensive documentation showing efforts to file the application on time, including calls to DOE, overnight delivery of a hard copy and e-mails about continuing problems with the electronic application process.

"This will put us out of business. We may have to close down," said Clark.

Headquartered in a converted parachute factory in the middle of downtown Chelsea, Choice Thru

Education provides daily tutoring and mentoring services to about 75 high school students.

Hundreds more attend its summer programs while many parents of the students — mostly immigrants from Haiti, Central America and the Horn of Africa — show up in the evenings at the Pearl Street building to learn English. Over 5,000 students have passed through Choice's doors since they opened in 1966.

With the program budget gutted, Clark has already laid off staff but continues to serve students who need help.

"We're applying for foundation grants to keep us going," she said. "As long as we can keep the building open, we will."

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Roxbury Prep state's best in grade 8 math

Dan Devine

When city and state education officials gathered in Roxbury earlier this month to applaud students' improved performance on the 2007 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests, much of the praise was directed at Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School, the struggling Albany Street school where a year of significant progress has administrators using words like "turnaround."

But if they'd set up shop at 120 Fisher Avenue — about a 10-minute drive from Orchard Gardens, on the other side of Columbus, just past the

Parker Hill Playground — they'd have seen what it looks like when the turnaround hits 180 degrees. At Roxbury Preparatory Charter School, they'd have seen just how much progress persistence can bring.

For the fourth straight year, Roxbury Prep — a middle school with an enrollment of just 200 students, all of whom are minorities, many from underprivileged backgrounds — stands as the highest-performing urban middle school in Massachusetts. On six of the seven 2007 MCAS tests, a higher percentage of Prep students earned "advanced" or "proficient" scores — the top two categories of

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