

Claudia Lefko: Rothenberg the right choice for a complex ward

Ward 3 could be the most complex ward in the city of Northampton. We are home to the 3-County Fairgrounds, the airport, the Amtrak station and the wastewater treatment plant; we have the senior center, 33 Hawley Street, the Post Office and Bridge Street School which struggles with its unique set of issues. We have businesses and residences. Our housing stock is mixed, including low-income/elderly apartments at the Walter Salvo House and mixed-rate housing at the Lumberyard. There's open space — the vast meadows and a small conservation area in Montview, and there's the Connecticut River! Ward 3 is and maybe always has been the most complex ward in the city. And, thus perhaps the most challenging to represent.

For some years, the city and Planning Department have been intent on “development,” increasing upscale infill housing throughout the ward, with little or no input from residents; and without adequate plans to improve the old, crumbling infrastructure — the sidewalks and streets — to accommodate this development.

Given this, it seems a no-brainer to return our current city councilor, Quaverly Rothenberg to office. She has two solid years of council work under her belt. And her “work,” her involvement in the ward, didn't begin two years ago; Quaverly was on the Bridge Street School Council, and served as president of the Ward 3 Committee. She has been focused on critical issues in the ward, where past councilors seemed more concerned with issues in the city-at-large. That being said, it was Quaverly who helped crack open the quagmire of city spending and the budget issues that have defined this election season. She has been a passionate, informed advocate for the ward and for ward residents.

Losing Quaverly means losing years of accrued knowledge and experience in Ward 3; it means losing the momentum for change that's been building in the ward and across the city. It means losing the possibility for much-needed change and for more participatory government. We (literally) cannot afford to elect a newcomer at this critical moment.

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Northampton