

Housing Advocates Host Livestreamed Candidates Forum

Candidates for town offices talked about housing and affordability issues as the Huntington Township Housing Coalition hosted the first major meet the candidates night of the season.

The event included candidates for Huntington Supervisor and Town Board and was live-streamed to a record audience, according to organizers. It was hosted by the Huntington Township Housing Coalition and Housing Help, and welcomed the three candidates for Supervisor: Republican Ed Smyth, Democrat Rebecca Sanin and Republican Gene Cook who is running on an inde-

pendent line; and four Town Board candidates: Republicans Dave Bennardo and Sal Ferro, and Democrats Jennifer Hebert and Joe Schram.

The focus of the forum – housing availability and affordability – transcended party lines with all of the candidates broadly agreed on the need for more affordable housing. The differences were in the approaches each offered as a way to create it.

The consensus was that it starts with infrastructure. Candidates generally agreed on a need to increase sewer capacity both to protect our waters and

allow for more development.

They also agreed on a need for more parking in downtown Huntington, but did not all agree a parking garage is the answer.

"I was pleased to see that all the candidates brought their "A-game" and did so in a respectful, thoughtful manner," said Roger Weaving, president of the Huntington Township Housing Coalition, who moderated the event with Housing Help representative Thao Williams.

"There were a number of interesting ideas proposed. It gives us hope that the next board might finally address our crushing affordable housing need and the

infrastructure issues that have been restricting progress."

While such events are normally held in front of a live audience, the pandemic prompted a change to a streaming event.

That turned out to be a blessing, according to Weaving. "We had over 1000 views across all platforms, which is many more than we could have reached for an in-person event," he said. "I would encourage everyone to watch the recording of the event which can be found on our Facebook page. This is an important election, and it's important the electorate be informed before they vote."