

How council arrived at council replacement choice

By Joanne Mallazewski
staff writer

Planning commissioner Robert Anzlovor will be the new face on the Farmington Hills City Council.

But it took 4½ hours of interviews, debate and the votes Monday for the council to choose between Anzlovor and twice-unsuccessful council contender Terry Sever.

From the first of seven votes taken to narrow down the field of 19 applicants, council members were divided between Anzlovor and Sever.

Council members moved to make Anzlovor's appointment unanimous only after Councilwoman Jan Dolan broke the almost two-hour tie and voted for Anzlovor in the seventh round.

ANZLOVAR ALSO was backed by council members Joan Dudley, Jodi Soronen and Joe Alkateeb. Voting for Sever were Councilman Donn Wolf and Mayor Charles Williams.

Frustrated with their own indecisiveness after four votes were taken without a majority for Sever or Anzlovor, council members decided Alkateeb's motion to bring former council member and appointment contender Jack Burwell back into the running.

That motion was followed by another one to also reconsider applicant Masie Kurzeja, who in several of the votes closely followed Sever and Anzlovor.

But when a vote was taken between Anzlovor, Sever and Kurzeja, the six council members tied again.

After that tie, the council returned to deciding between Anzlovor and Sever.

THE PROCESS council used to weed its way through the 19 candidates began with allowing the 16 candidates in the room to talk with the council for five minutes. Council members questioned each candidate after his presentation.

The interviews completed, the council members voted for their favorite to narrow the field to three candidates.

In that first vote, both Anzlovor and Sever received four votes, followed by Burwell and planning commissioner Ben Marks, a late applicant, each receiving three votes. Kurzeja and Democratic activist Aldo Vagnozzi both received two votes each.

Rather than immediately try another vote to narrow the field further, council members took turns touting the qualifications of their chosen candidates.

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"I THINK Terry (Sever) is probably more involved in the community than anyone who appeared here tonight," Wolf said, although noting he did not totally agree with many of Sever's ideas.

But Wolf added that Sever's 2,966 votes in last November's election putting him closely behind fourth-place winner Hughes "carries an awful lot of weight for me."

Williams, who admitted he was behind Sever from the moment Hughes announced his intention to resign in early January, said despite believing Burwell "did a great job as a mayor and council member," Sever fared better in the last election.

Nonetheless, Williams said the council's vote was shaping up between the "liberals" and the "conservatives."

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AFTER DUDLEY mumbled in response to Williams' description of the council's feelings, the mayor asked her to "shut up."

But Alkateeb quickly added that if the council was going to take an applicant's election vote totals into consideration, interviewing candidates to fill the vacancy should have been unnecessary.

"I'm still looking at what the people said just a few months ago," Wolf said, referring to Sever's election finish.

But Alkateeb also pointed to what he believed were Sever's uncommitted answers to questions, for example, about asking voters if taxes should be raised.

"I wasn't too disturbed with the double answers," Wolf responded, followed by a burst of laughter from the audience of more than 50 residents and applicants.

DOLAN, HOWEVER, continued with the thought that Sever's vote totals showed the public wanted him on the city council.

But as usual in most city elections where voter turnout is low, Soronen said, "I don't know if any of us can claim a mandate."

Nonetheless, Soronen added, Anzlovor's experience on the planning commission gives him an edge over Sever.

"Some consideration should be given to Anzlovor because he comes from the

other side of the fence," Alkateeb said, referring to the candidate's planning commission experience.

Anzlovor "thinks methodically," is an "analyzer" and is involved in the community, Alkateeb said.

MEANWHILE, HOWEVER, Alkateeb also indicated that by appointing Sever, the council would have three members who are Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce members.

Echoing Soronen's sentiments, Dudley said Anzlovor had taken his planning commission duties "seriously, not looking for political gain." On the other hand, she said, a "vast difference" between Sever's experience with the Jaycees, and chamber of commerce and sitting on the city council.

"I think it's time we erased emotions from this decision," she said. The city council should look at Anzlovor's experience in government versus sentimentality for Sever waging two unsuccessful election campaigns, she said.

Despite the push for Sever and Anzlovor, some council members also campaigned for Kurzeja and Marks, who both made the first cut of candidates.

ALTHOUGH VAGNOZZI also made the first round of cuts, council members did not speak to his qualifications, even though he was one of the few candidates who discussed issues facing the city rather than rest on his qualifications alone.

Debate splits council into factions

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Concluding her questioning, Dolan asked both candidates whether either had made any commitments to any of the current council members that would interfere in their work on the council should they be appointed.

Both Sever and Anzlovor responded they had no commitments. But Dudley said perhaps Dolan's question should have been asked of certain council members.

Meanwhile, after the council took several tie votes between Sever and Anzlovor, Councilman Joe Alkateeb said, "Had I voted for Sever, it would have been over, right?"

RESPONDING to his own question, however, Alkateeb said that when he asked Sever questions, "I'm getting double answers."

"I'm very proud of the fact that I'm

voting my conscience," Alkateeb said, referring to his vote for Anzlovor.

But as time wore on, Alkateeb tried to dissuade Sever's qualifications.

"I've got a small problem. I think you can help me," Alkateeb said to Sever. "Sometimes I wondered if you're too good to be true."

Referring to Sever's involvement with the state and local Jaycees, Alkateeb questioned how the candidate also has the time to work, as well as be a board of director for the Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce.

Assuring Alkateeb he would be ready to put aside his activities to serve on the city council, Sever said, "I'm sure there have been a few times when I've dropped the ball."

In the second round of questioning,

however, Alkateeb asked Sever if it wasn't true that he had been asked to resign from the local Rotary Club because he never attended. Alkateeb also said that although Sever had been elected as a Republican Party precinct delegate, someone else had to take his place.

BUT AFTER the appointment was made, Sever told the Farmington Observer he had volunteered to resign

from the Rotary Club because he had made strong commitments to the Michigan Jaycees.

"I think it was unjustified for Joe Alkateeb to make reference to that when he in fact was not a member of the Rotary himself," Sever said.

Although disappointed he was not appointed to the council, Sever said he was "in no way bitter or disappointed" in Anzlovor's appointment or in the council's appointment procedure.

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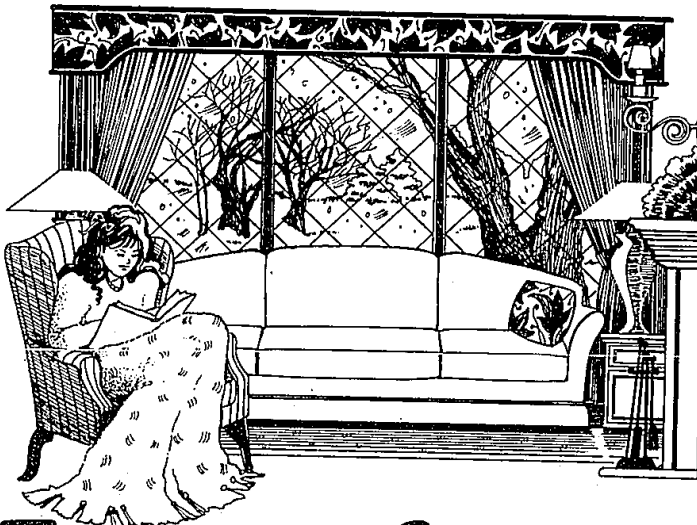
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