

Ward 3 City Council seat has a last-minute challenger

AVON

By Rebecca Turman

This November, Avon Ward 3 Councilman Mark Yonchak may have some competition, if challenger Brian Parsons has anything to say about it.

Yonchak recently announced his intent to run for re-election, and, according to the Lorain County Board of Elections, he has already filed his petitions.

Parsons, on the other hand, pulled petitions on Aug. 17. The deadline for filing petitions is Aug. 20, and the official election roster will not be available until Aug. 27.

Yonchak was appointed to the Ward 3 seat in November 2007 after Councilman Tim Nickum's death. (Parsons also applied for Nickum's seat.) Yonchak finished out Nickum's term through Dec. 31, 2007, and then in January 2008, he was reappointed for a two-year term.

Yonchak, a 10-year resident, said he is proud of his achievements while serving on council the past two-plus years.

"I got the recycling going along with Ellen Young," Yonchak said of Avon's automated recycling program that was negotiated with Allied Waste. "That was something that sat in the service committee for years."

Yonchak said the recycling increased significantly in the city. He also played a part in getting a city leaf pickup program up and running for this fall, he said.

"Leaf pickup was on the agenda for 13 years," he said with a laugh. "We finally put the plan together."

Yonchak would like to be a part of the city's future planning, he said.

"We don't have a commercial property maintenance code," he said, for example. "To me, it's shocking that a city like Avon doesn't have that."

The Service Committee, which Yonchak chairs, is also reviewing a sidewalk master plan, which was suggested by Councilman Dan Urban during a council meeting. Yonchak said committee members are still in the research phase.

"It's a big 800-pound elephant," Yonchak said, referring to creating a plan. "Nobody has ever sat and put it on paper."

Yonchak would also like to continue serving on the Parks and Recreation Commission, he said.

Some issues he plans to examine include Schwartz Road Park, taking a closer look at the concession stands there, and the possibility of an outdoor pool in the center of the city.

During a recent council meeting, Yonchak voted "no" to place on the ballot a levy for the construction of a new library. Yonchak explained his vote.

"I talked to a lot of people in my ward," he said.



Parsons



Yonchak

"From my perspective, you have to give people what their options are. I'm absolutely for the library. I believe the library needs to be upgraded."

However, Yonchak said the voters need all the facts.

"There is an opportunity for expansion," he said. "It ought to be decided by voters, but I don't think it should be decided by the citizens until they have all the facts. I like to vote, not with my opinions, but what I think the people of my ward thought."

In general, Yonchak said he'd like to hear from more residents.

"People only tend to call you when there is a problem," he said. "I'd like to hear more from them about what they'd like to see in Avon."

Overall, Yonchak said he would like to follow through on his work as a council member.

"I like being involved in the community," he said. "I like fulfilling this role on council."

"I hope the voters think that I've done a decent job, and I hope to find that out in November."

Parsons ran for an at-large council seat in the November 2007 election.

"I decided two years ago that I wanted to get involved," he said. "I really liked Tim Nickum and did not want to run against him," he added of his reason for running for an at-large seat at that time. "He was a mentor to me."

Though Parsons did not win an at-large seat on council, he said he has kept in touch with issues affecting Avon residents.

"The issues are still the same," he said. "Managing growth, managing commercial development has been more important than two years ago. There hasn't been much of it."

Many developments have sat empty and unfinished, due to the economy, he said.

"I'm not saying that's anyone's fault," he said. "Assuming the economy turns around, there needs to be an emphasis on managing that growth."

The fact that the Lorain Public Library System

will ask voters to approve the construction of a new Avon Library to be built on the Peak property, south of the Avon fire and police stations, directly affects Ward 3 residents, Parsons said, and will need to be managed effectively if voters give it the OK.

Parsons shared his opinion on council's recent action to send the library issue to the ballot.

"It's City Council's job to put appropriate measures to the public," he said. "You could make the argument that they should have asked the library for other options, but at the end of the day, that didn't happen. It isn't a glaring omission. My personal belief is that when issues like this come up, that all alternatives should be explored. I'm not saying, by any means, that council didn't do that. It's not City Council's job to decide whether the library is a good thing or a bad thing."

Parsons highlighted several issues important to him, one being the quality of life in the city.

Though the city has several parks, Parsons said he would like to see more open, public green space.

"We have a ton of property that has yet to be developed," he said.

Traffic is another issue that needs to be looked at, he added, mentioning that the Nagel Road interchange will need to be managed in the future.

The citizens of Avon have been "extremely generous in terms of passing levies" during his seven years of residency, he said.

"What I'd like to take a look at...let's take the 'need to have' versus the 'nice to have,'" he said.

Parsons feels his background, including working as director of sales for Pandigital and serving as a citizen's representative, subcommittee finance chairman and vice chairman on the Lorain County Solid Waste Policy Committee, will help him as a councilman.

"The past two years...I pushed really hard early in that process to get Avon to be on the front edge of that adoption of the volume based program," he said. "The recycling is up an ungodly number."

"I have a lot of business experience. I know how to manage projects. I think I can build a consensus."

If elected, Parsons said he plans to start a Web site, updating projects he's working on to inform residents to promote open communication.

"I just want the opportunity to serve," he said. "I think it's a great community. This will be the first time since Tim Nickum was elected that the citizens will get to elect a Ward 3 councilman. It's going to be fun to have a good campaign."

According to Board of Election records, Kevin Ward, who lives in Ward 3, also pulled petitions; however, he did not indicate whether he was running for an at-large seat or challenging Yonchak's ward seat. Ward could not be reached for comment prior to The Press deadline by phone.