

“One good thing about music, when the music hits you, you feel no pain”
ELLA FITZGERALD AMERICAN SINGER-SONGWRITER

Democrat cruises to victory in quiet special alder election downtown

BY ELIJAH HUREWITZ-RAVITCH
STAFF REPORTER

Democrat Christine Kim '99 came out on top in a quiet special election for Ward 7 alder Tuesday evening.

Kim, a community organizer, beat her write-in opponent Kyle Ross by 72 percentage points. She will soon be sworn in to represent parts of downtown and East Rock on the Board of Alders.

“I feel really grateful for all of the residents who came out,” Kim said just after an election official read out the results in the basement of the city’s Hall of Records on Orange Street. “Everyone that came are people that came out because they care about their neighborhood, they care about their city and they care about democracy, because it’s not easy to come out for a special election randomly.”

Tuesday’s special election was triggered by the surprise resignation of Eli Sabin ’22 LAW ’26, who stepped down from the Board of Alders less than an hour before he was set to be sworn in for a third term as Ward 7 alder.

Between early, absentee and in-person voting, 193 Ward 7 residents cast their ballots – 166 for Kim and 27 for Ross. The turnout represents just under 7 percent of the ward’s active registered voters.

Ross, a financial advisor, is a Republican, but ran as a write-in candidate because of an error with the paperwork he submitted to the city clerk, causing his name not to appear on the ballot. He said in a telephone interview that the election’s results were “disappointing” but added that

his campaign had done its best.

“We gave it a good college try, and we left it on the field,” Ross said. “It’s just a heavily blue area.”

Incumbent mayor Justin Elicker, a Democrat, won around 92 percent of the vote in Ward 7 in November’s municipal election.

Kim said that she set up a table laden with snacks and campaign literature at 5:30 a.m. in front of the Hall of Records. Ross joined his opponent around 8 a.m.

Ross said that Kim struck him as a “really good person” and added that “we’ll definitely be in communication going forward.”

Ross had hoped to “to get about 75 votes and then have a little bit lower turnout than what we had,” he said.

“That’s a winnable bogey,” he added, alluding to a one-over-par golf result.

As voting on Tuesday drew to a close, Ward 9 Alder Caroline Tanbee Smith ’14 SOM ’25 and Ward 14 Alder Sarah Miller ’03 arrived to support Kim and help her break down her table. And as the clock struck 8 p.m., Ward 1 Alder Elias Theodore ’27 and Ward 27 Alder Richard Furlow appeared at the Hall of Records to hear the results.

Tanbee Smith, a longtime friend of Kim’s, said that she was “excited” to get to work with the alder-elect. She added that they already have a project in the works – a raised crosswalk at the intersection of Humphrey and Pleasant Streets, which sits at the border between their respective wards.

Kevin Arnold, the head election moderator, said that this race’s turnout was “unfortunately” average for a special election. But Ward



ELIJAH HUREWITZ-RAVITCHS / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Christine Kim '99 was elected to represent Ward 7 in the Board of Alders, as just under 200 voters cast their ballots in a special election set off by the resignation of Eli Sabin '22 LAW '26 last month.

7 tends to have higher voter participation relative to other wards, he added.

Kim speculated that the election’s timing might have had something to do with low turnout.

“It’s hard. It’s Tuesday right after a long weekend,” she said.

Campaigning for alder was “wonderful,” Kim said. After a

full night’s sleep, she said she plans to reach out to Board of Alders leadership.

“I’m not going to come in thinking I really know anything,” Kim said. “I want to come in and learn how it works, and also communicate that to our residents so they know all the hard work that goes into making

the city run.”

Around 600 people voted in last November’s municipal election in Ward 7, according to data from New Haven’s registrar of voters.

Contact **ELIJAH HUREWITZ-RAVITCH** at elijah.hurewitz-ravitch@yale.edu

Committee of alders advances plan to acquire English Station for park



KELLY KONG / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Some residents expressed support for the proposed project, but many raised concerns about expenses and the city’s ability to maintain public facilities.

BY KELLY KONG
STAFF REPORTER

New Haven officials want to build a public park with an outdoor aquatic center – complete with a pool and lazy river – on the site of a decommissioned power plant, but they don’t yet own the property.

At a Board of Alders Community Development Committee meeting on Wednesday evening, the city received approval to move one step closer to the acquisition of the English Station site through either negotiated purchase or, if necessary, eminent domain.

Michael Piscitelli, the city’s economic development administrator, presented the acquisition as a crucial step toward building community assets that will allow for the expansion of public recreation facilities, housing markets and neighborhood renewal.

“How do you build a new neighborhood and area that’s highly characterized by brown-fields, significant environmental justice concerns and low intensity uses?” Piscitelli asked at Wednes-

day’s meeting, referring to abandoned and underused properties in the city.

A new park, he said, may help the city create “a neighborhood of distinction.”

Piscitelli emphasized that the acquisition would also advance remediation and clean-up efforts at the site, which is contaminated with dangerous pollutants.

Five members of the committee voted in favor of moving forward with the city’s request, while one voted against.

During public testimony, proponents of the acquisition expressed enthusiasm for the city’s ability to expand access to swimming lessons, induce economic revival and clean up a site that has been unused and polluted for over three decades.

Sebastian Ward ’26, a lifelong resident of New Haven, said his parents signed him up for swimming lessons at the city’s LEAP program, or Leadership Education & Athletics in Partnership, when he was young, which helped him build “confidence, discipline and life skills” that he still carries today.

The proposed aquatic center, Ward said, “would expand this foundation of services, helping produce more well grounded young people with access to the same opportunities that shaped me.”

New Havener Manmita Dutta cited environmental justice as a key reason for supporting the city’s proposal.

“For nearly 100 years, the site has blocked New Haven residents from their own waterfront,” Dutta said. “Environmental justice means we stop asking working class communities to live with the toxic leftovers.”

She added that waterfront parks create a shared civic space for New Haven families who can’t afford swimming private classes or summer travel. “In the summer, families need safe places where children can be active, healthy and connected,” Dutta said.

Other residents, however, are more skeptical about the park’s proposed benefits.

Lee Cruz, the chair of the Fair Haven community management team, said that the city does not have a lack of

parks or pools, but instead has a maintenance problem with its existing public facilities.

“Half a mile away is the John Martinez School,” Cruz said in an interview, referring to the STEM magnet school a ten-minute walk from Ball Island, where English Station is located. “The pool there is often closed because we don’t have the money to maintain it.”

“Why would we build another pool on toxic land?” he said in his public testimony.

Cruz added that an outdoor pool in Connecticut could only be used for four months a year, but would nonetheless be costly.

Rafael Fuentes, a Fair Haven resident, expressed little faith in the city’s ability to maintain the new park.

“It’ll get built, done, and it’s not only going to be a burden on the taxpayer, it’s going to be another dilapidated park that’s not being taken care of,” Fuentes said in an interview.

In his testimony, he stood by these concerns and added that the city doesn’t currently have a

“good idea” for the site that warrants negotiated purchase or eminent domain.

Kimberly Acosta, a resident of New Haven, said that the budget necessary for both property remediation and development of the site is still undetermined. The city, she said, also hasn’t taken the Fair Haven community’s actual visions and needs into proper consideration.

“They recklessly pursued this park and pool idea,” Acosta said. “I do not trust them to honor community input and alternative uses after the land has been acquired.”

Michael Berindei, a New Haven resident and photographer, proposed that the English Station building can be remediated without demolition and repurposed into a valuable cultural and historical site for the city.

“English Station is truly unique, as it reflects the civic architecture of New Haven itself,” Berindei said. “The designers drew from local churches, Yale’s collegiate Gothic buildings and City Hall in order to establish the power company as an equal to these longstanding and respected institutions.”

He raised several examples of successful, comparable power plant redevelopments from across the country, such as projects accomplished in cities like Savannah, Georgia, and Lansing, Michigan.

Leslie Blatteau ’97 GRD ’07, the president of New Haven’s teachers’ union, questioned the city’s priorities in financial and future planning in light of the city’s budget concerns for New Haven Public Schools.

“We have schools with sewage links. Temperatures in our schools this winter have been at 50 degrees on multiple sites,” Blatteau said. “We don’t even have the money to handle what currently is dilapidated for 18,000 kids and thousands of workers.”

When asked about community opposition against the city’s plans, Piscitelli said in an interview that the committee’s approval on acquisition is “an important step of the process, but just one step of the process.”

“Lots of thoughtful comments tonight,” Piscitelli added. “We need to take them all seriously.”

English Station is located at 510 Grand Ave.

Contact **KELLY KONG** at kelly.kong@yale.edu.