Forum

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given priority admittance to the event, organizers said. Audience members will be have opportunities to ask the candidates questions.

The forum will be moderated by Tompkins County League of Women Voters President Kay Sharp.

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Meet the candidates

Kelles is an independent Democrat running on the Ithaca Community ballot line. She works as the director of strategic development for the Green Resource Hub.

Kelles founded the DeWitt Park Neighborhood Association, which is an activist group that galvanized support around the Franklin Properties proposal to develop condominiums at the Old Library building.

"I grew up here, in this town, I live here, I own a house here and I attend functions here, not because I feel obligated, but because I love what Fall Creek has to offer," Kelles said. "I feel that I have a finger on the pulse of what the culture is here in Fall Creek, and I believe every district is different."

Shinagawa is a former Tompkins County legislator and Democratic candidate for U.S. Congress. He is running as a Democrat.

"Continuing on the County Legislature, I know that Fall Creek residents are very concerned about making sure that we have an incentive policy that is sustainable and also supports local jobs, and I continue to work on law enforcement accountability, bringing a living wage to Tompkins County, and getting further reforms with our Industrial Development agency (tax abatement) policies," Shinagawa said.

Shinagawa stepped down from his position as a Tompkins County legislator in September to move into a home with his wife in the 2nd District. He had represented the Collegetown and Commons area, the 4th District, for 10 years. He works as an administrator at Robert Packer Hospital in Sayre, Pennsylvania.

Tax abatements

Property tax abatements for developers in Tompkins County have been the center of continued controversy.

Some argue that tax breaks should only be given when developers pay living wages, employ local workers, and harness renewable power and energy efficiency. Others say that such requirements would make projects non-viable in Ithaca.

"We need to have abatements to promote economic development and more housing and expansion of the tax base," Shinagawa said.

He added that lawmakers must balance abatements with assuring that they support local jobs, living wages, environmentally friendly buildings and sustainable, community-driven development.

"Have we stimulated development enough that we no longer need (tax abatements)?" Kelles said. "That's a question that I think we should ask, and I don't think they should be given as a matter of course."

If tax abatements are awarded, projects should be required to offer living wages, employ local workers and create environmentally friendly developments, Kelles added.

Both candidates said they support incremental increases that will raise the minimum wage to a living wage in Tompkins County.

Old Library

Tompkins County lawmakers saw an overwhelming push from City of Ithaca residents who spoke out at public meetings and supported a condominium development for the Old Library site on North Cayuga Street.

Despite the public support for condominiums, lawmakers endorsed a plan to build apartments on the site. Kelles was a lead voice in the push for condominiums; Shinagawa cast the swing vote that pushed the proposal for apartments forward.

Shinagawa said he supported the condominium plan, but it appeared that the plan didn't have enough support for county lawmakers to pass.

"That's when I had to make the very tough decision, despite, probably, the pushback I would get for it," Shinagawa said.

He voted in favor of the apartment proposal to assure that plans to develop the old library site moved forward.

"I thought that the worst thing we could do is have that property be vacant, continue to be an eyesore and also continue to be a drain on taxpayers," Shinagawa said.

Kelles argued that the condominium plan could have won the Legislature's support, and she would not have supported the apartment proposal.

"There are a lot of rental properties going up right now, and although we desperately need density in this town, my concern is that we aren't seeing any homeowner options going up, and this would have provided 22 condominiums," she said.

Police accountability

Kelles said she supports body cameras for police as a form of accountability, but she wants emphasis placed on not allowing the cameras to invade citizens' privacy.

Police officers who enter homes with a running video camera would be invading people's privacy, she said.

"I think that there needs to be guidelines on what information we use from the cameras, and there also has to be some oversight on who gets access to the videos," she said.

Shinagawa said he wants to continue his work on the county's public safety committee on equipping Ithaca Police and Tompkins County Sheriff's deputies with body cameras. He added that it's important to follow through with a study into the Hornbrook Road incident.

"Those are both major priorities for me," Shinagawa said.

Follow Andrew Casler on Twitter @AndrewCasler.

LOCAL BRIEFS

McLean man sold narcotic drug, police say

State police say a man is accused of illegally selling a prescription narcotic drug in Tompkins County.

Christopher Clark, 33, of McLean was arrested Tuesday as part of a multi-agency drug investigation. Police say he sold the drug oxymorphone, which is a narcotic pain reliever, to another person.

Clark was charged with a felony count of third-degree criminal sale of a controlled substance, arraigned in Groton Town Court, and sent to the Tompkins County jail with bail set at $12,000 cash or $24,000 bond.

Members of the state police Community Narcotics Enforcement Team, Ithaca Police Department and Tompkins County Sheriff's Department participated in the investigation.

Ithaca Town Hall closing early Monday

Town of Ithaca Town Hall offices will close at 3 p.m. Monday, Oct. 26, for training.

The town hall will reopen at 8 a.m. Tuesday, according to a news release.

Questions should be directed to Paulette Terwilliger, town clerk, the release stated.

Learn about Medicare enrollment

Lifelong will hold information clinics to help seniors and younger disabled persons during the Medicare during open enrollment period, which runs until Dec. 7.

Medicare recipients can review their current coverage to see if they wish to make any changes for 2016.

Lifelong's Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program will have clinics: 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Oct. 28, Nov. 5, 11, 18 and Dec. 4, and 1 to 3 p.m. Dec. 2. Lifelong is at 119 W. Court St. in Ithaca.

Medicare recipients, and soon-to-be recipients, should bring information on their current coverage, their list of drugs, and any questions they have.

Persons with other Medicare-related questions are welcome, according to a news release.

For more information, call 607-273-1511 or visit Lifelong's website at www.tclifelong.org.

Lab

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the explosion of the craft brewing industry, we need science supporting that, to make sure people don't get sick and the product they're selling is safe for the market. That's what this major is all about."

Boor said the ultimate goal of Stocking Hall, besides attracting the best talent it can and developing quality products, is to introduce its graduates into the local economy and help energize the alcoholic beverage industry. Last year, the industry generated more than $7 billion in economic impact, according to combined figures from the New York Wine and Grape Foundation, and the New York State Brewers Association.

"Our goal is to use agriculture, and our burgeoning food and craft beverage industries as a tool for economic development for upstate New York," Boor said. "Creating jobs that create a good place to live for everyone."

Numerous, high-profile research projects have been carried out within the walls of Stocking Hall, such as Big Red Refuel, a milk-based, high-protein beverage, that was developed in the labs there.

Deanna Simons, quality manager and academic program coordinator for Cornell Dairy, said the improvements create an environment that raises the profile of the dairy's role throughout the state.

"It's literally viewed 360 degrees now, so to actually be visible, I think, actually makes the dairy more accountable and incorporated into the campus," Simons said. "Before, the dairy was just a place to produce products, where now, it's a much more open-door policy. People are allowed in, we actually do workshops in the dairy, students intern in here and professors can actually hold workshops in here."

The facility also has a test kitchen, helping students who previously had to use their home kitchens for project preparation.

The wine library will document and allow students to taste experimental blends and experience the processes of creating wines. Boor also noted that a family member of Finger Lakes wine industry pioneer Dr. Konstantin Frank is a student in the school.

"We're training the children of our winemakers," Boor said. "They can come here and experiment on a small-scale batch without them having to worry about losing their whole year's production doing something that's not going to work."

Follow Nick Reynolds on Twitter @IJCityWatch.