

Yoon and Connolly Draw First Blood

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By Ted Siefer - Courant News Writer - 6/30/2007

Councilor Sam Yoon and John Connolly have scored early victories in this year's City Council race, winning the endorsement of the Ward 5 Democratic Committee, which represents the Back Bay, Beacon Hill and parts of the Fenway and South End.

The endorsement for the at-large seats on the council was the first of many citywide as candidates jockey for position ahead of election season.

Ward 5 Chairman Rob Whitney said the choice of Yoon and Connolly, following a June 21 candidates forum, reflected a desire for new blood at City Hall. "He's a new face," said Whitney of Connolly, who is making his second consecutive bid for one of the council's four at-large seats. "I think people thought the same way when Sam was elected. He's someone with new ideas."

Yoon was elected in 2005 and is the city's first Asian-American lawmaker.

Winning the endorsement required a two-thirds vote of the 19-member committee, a mark narrowly missed by veteran Councilors Michael Flaherty and Felix Arroyo, who was the only at-large candidate endorsed by Ward 5 in 2005.

"People look at the Ward 5 endorsement as a barometer for a candidacy," Connolly said. "I think this is a big, early sign of my campaign gaining momentum and picking up ground where we didn't have major support two years ago. It's also a sign of making inroads among the progressives in Ward 5."

In the 2005 election, Connolly received 11.4 percent of the Ward 5 vote, which was spread among eight candidates. Yoon received 18.6 percent, the most of any at-large candidate in Ward 5.

For Yoon, winning the Ward 5 endorsement this year was a referendum on his service. "People are happy with my performance in office," Yoon said. Yoon attributed part of his appeal in the down-town neighborhoods to his willingness to challenge the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and how it manages development.

"I want to use my development and finance background to make sure I have access to the BRA machine," Yoon said. "I believe in community-driven planning, but we have a tendency to undermine the intelligence of city residents and what's best for them."

In all, nine candidates are running for the at-large, or citywide, seats on the council, including all four current at-large councilors: Yoon, Flaherty, Arroyo and Stephen Murphy. The other candidates are: William Estrada, Matthew Geary, Martin Hogan and David James Wyatt. The field will be narrowed to eight following a preliminary election on Tuesday, September 25.

Councilor Michael Ross is running unopposed for the District 8 seat, which covers the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Fenway and Mission Hill.