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Ward 18: Goodbye Giambrone, hello anyone but

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It's a picture-perfect political standoff.

In one corner: Kevin Beaulieu, former assistant to disgraced Davenport Councillor Adam Giambrone.

In the other: Ana Bailao, former assistant to Giambrone's long-ago rival Mario Silva, now MP for the riding of Davenport.

Beaulieu's a New Democrat. Bailao has strong Liberal Party ties.

He's intensely loyal to Giambrone. She lost to him in the 2003 election.

Yet unlike their former bosses, who waged bitter campaigns against each other in the 2000 election, the two front-runners in the race for Ward 18's empty council seat duke it out with poise and subtle digs.



Candidate Ana Bailao, left, says many residents in Ward 18 are unhappy.

TALOTTA/TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

"Residents feel they haven't been heard in a few years now . . . by our councillor and his staff," Bailao carefully points out.

Translation: Remember that guy? He was Giambrone's right-hand man when he restricted parking on Dundas St. W., pushed development projects forward without consulting residents and ignored calls to address safety concerns in the Bloor and Lansdowne area.

Ask Bailao or any of the other candidates vying for the council seat and they will tell you exactly how the people of Ward 18 feel: unhappy. Residents haven't been listened to and don't want "more of the same."

Beaulieu's greatest challenge will be fending off the Giambrone jabs — from all 11 running mates — and setting himself apart from his former boss.

So far he has attempted to do so with a spoonful of sugar, curbing direct questions about Giambrone's mistakes with optimism that counters the people-are-unhappy song his competitors have been singing in full chorus.

"We want a councillor who can recognize the good in our community and build on the successes," Beaulieu said at a Roger's all-candidates debate on Sept. 29. Positivity is his M.O.

Beaulieu, 39, is known around city hall to be humble and hard-working. To the wider public, he's best known as the guy who finished Giambrone's mayoral race dropout speech.

Bailao, 34, a Portuguese immigrant with deep roots in Davenport and a track record of volunteer work, retreated to the private sector after she lost to Giambrone by 1,200 votes in 2003.

If elected this time around, Bailao says she will hold weekly open office hours in community centres across the ward and create a development and planning council to ensure residents' concerns are heard.

Just west of the downtown core, Davenport is home to Little Portugal, bustling bars and coffee shops, swaths of artists and middle and working-class families. There is massive redevelopment potential in the ward and the people who live there want to have a say in what happens.

Those who don't feel Beaulieu or Bailao are up to the task have a range of other candidates to choose from — all promising more community engagement and to push for electrification of the Pearson rail link.

[Hema Vyas](#), a public servant who was once the president of the June Callwood Centre for Women and Families, lives in Ward 14 but is running in Davenport. Vyas, 37, stresses that she is running as an independent candidate, without the “political baggage” that comes with party ties.

“It gives me more accountability and more freedom to represent our communities directly,” she said.

[Frank de Jong](#), a public school teacher and former leader of the Green Party of Ontario, feels differently about political connections.

“When you’re out of the closet as a politician it gives (people) a real sense of where you’re coming from,” de Jong said.

A resident of Bloordale and year-round cyclist, de Jong, 54, says far too many people use Ward 18 as a freeway to get into the city. He wants to move traffic out of the ward, build more bike lanes and get rid of the strip clubs on Bloor.

[Ken Wood](#), 61, a newbie to municipal politics who once saved a tree by chaining himself to it during the narrowing of Lansdowne, has been actively blogging his way through the campaign.

He wants to address poverty, hunger and homelessness in the city and says he would spend 20 per cent of his councillor’s salary on an initiative to reach every resident in their own language. Wood lives on a disability pension and is running a low-budget campaign.

“Don’t let the suit fool you, because I’m actually a low-income person,” he announced at a Rogers all-candidates debate on Sept. 29.

[Kirk Russell](#), a 34-year-old father of two who runs his own construction company and has worked with the Dovercourt Boys and Girls club, dubbed his election campaign the Kirk Russell Movement.

His mantra? “I will take the will of the people to city hall, not the will of city hall to the people.”

[Joe MacDonald](#), 56, who has worked at all levels of government and on NDP election campaigns across the country, wants to shape up the ward’s parks and extend the municipal vote to new Canadians who are permanent residents of the city. MacDonald said his decades of political experience make him stand out as a candidate.

“This is a time when we need experience,” he said. “Adam Giambone did not have that.”

Ward 18, Davenport

- One of the smallest wards, geographically and by population (46,000)
- Population fell 7.2 per cent between 2001 and 2006
- More people in the 25-34 age group than in most parts of city
- More than half are renters
- Most don’t own vehicles
- 36 per cent are visible minorities
- Large Portuguese-speaking population
- Voter turnout in 2006 election: 35 per cent

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006