

Bayside Race Features Race, Religion -- and Some Issues

by Adam Fleischer

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Democrat Kevin Kim, left, and Republican/Independent Dan Holloran, right, are competing for Tony Avella's vacated council seat

Unlike most districts in this city, [district 19](#) has no clear party allegiance. Democrat [Tony Avella](#), who ran for mayor instead of seeking re-election, represented the district for the last eight years, and Republican Michael Abel served the northeast Queens district for two terms beginning in the early 1990s. Now, residents must decide between Democrat [Kevin Kim](#) and Republic/Independent [Dan Halloran](#), neither of whom have held office in the past.

One of the largest and most residential districts in the council, voters in the suburban 19th count preserving neighborhood character and curbing development among their most pressing issues. Coupling those with citywide topics like education, the development of green initiatives and improving transportation, the race is not lacking in issues. Yet, for much of the campaign, the focus of the media and candidates has veered away from the issues and onto name-calling and accusations.

Charges and Countercharges

In recent weeks, things have begun to turn ugly. Kim has [accused](#) Halloran's campaign of using scare tactics and racial politics, while the Halloran camp says that Kim's people took down some of his signs in the middle of the night.

Halloran calls into question his opponent's fundraising, charging that roughly 80 percent of the more than \$400,000 Kim has [raised](#) has come from outside of the district. Kim, who is not participating in the city's campaign finance system, claims that he has raised "three or four times" the amount that Halloran has within the district, and says his out-of-town contributions come from friends from his days as an undergraduate at Stanford and a law student at Columbia.

Halloran remains dubious. "Find comparative elections and tell me when anyone has ever

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raised half a million dollars for a council race," he said.

Halloran, who attributes many of the district's problems to development, also claims that a large sum of Kim's donations have come from developers. The Democrat disputes that. "Less than 1 percent of my political contributions come from developers or anyone related to construction," Kim responded.

For his part, Halloran has [raised](#) \$47,000 in private contributions.

In one of the most bizarre twists of any campaign this year, Halloran's religious beliefs have [emerged](#)

as an issue. The GOP candidate has

[charged](#)

that a September

[article](#)

in the Queens Tribune reporting that Halloran is a "first atheling" in a pagan church was tied to Kim. The Democrat has worked for Rep. Gary Ackerman, the newspaper's founder.

Back on Track

"I'm horrified that this is what we're talking about, instead of talking about all the problems we have in northeast Queens," said Halloran, echoing the view from both candidates that the issues remain of the greatest importance -- however contrary to their actions that may seem.

Both men attended New York City public schools -- Halloran in kindergarten, before attending Catholic school, and Kim through his high school years -- and each says they know what it takes to improve the system.

"I believe the educational system in this country is in a national crisis," said Kim, who was born in Korea but educated in the U.S. He would like to utilize local libraries as safe places kids can go after school to study and advocates affordable early education programs to help students reach their full potential. Kim also said class sizes must be reduced and teachers need to be better compensated.

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Halloran, too, says that class sizes are ballooning, a problem he links to over development. But he believes that is only one of the ways in which the system must be reformed.

"The mayor's program has done some things to improve the system," he said referring to mayoral control of schools, "but now they need to merge that with some hands-on involvement from each of our parent groups and teachers themselves." He proposes the establishment of a central board made up of parent and teacher representatives from all five boroughs, effectively allowing all parties and areas of the city to have an equal voice in the system.

Kim wants to borrow ideas from other cities around the country and the world to help make the district more green friendly. He advocates painting rooftops to reflect sunlight and planting more trees, saying that, "in the last year, we've lost 22 percent of the trees in Queens, and we need to reverse that trend." He blames developers for the losses.

With a similar eye on developers, Halloran says he will "make sure that if the city is awarding money for the building of any facilities, that those facilities are green facilities." In addition, he will encourage tax incentives for private developers to use green initiatives.

Halloran also wants taxes to come back to the district to be used on capital improvements like sewage lines and catchbasins.

Kim has focused on transportation. He said he will work to installing GPS navigation systems on buses so that residents, especially in the winter, can check if a bus is running late and plan their trips accordingly.