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## Forum sets up battle for control at city hall *(part 2)*

### Five candidates for two council seats

By Mary Schley

THE MEN vying for two Carmel City Council seats in the upcoming Nov. 5 election had their first opportunity Tuesday night to compare their views on the top issues of the day and show why voters should pick them over their opponents.

At a forum hosted by the Carmel Residents Association and moderated by Pine Cone publisher Paul Miller Sept. 17, candidates were asked to weigh in on everything from the budget and house numbers to the police station, state housing demands and getting residents more involved in local government.

On some issues, they were unified. Hans Buder, Bob Delves, Danny Hala, Parker Logan and David O’Neil all professed interest in converting Carmel from a general law city to a charter city to protect it from some state mandates, said they oppose any sort of paid parking, and want to find more and better ways for residents to speak their minds and feel heard by decision makers.

#### ‘The hot topic

In the age-old debate over house numbers — which the council narrowly decided last week should be put to voters in a November 2025 ballot measure that may or may not be binding — some were open to the idea, and one was not.

O’Neil advocated for having “some wonderful meetings where we discuss it and work through it” and then put it to the voters. “Five people on a council shouldn’t be making that decision,” he said.

Buder said he appreciates the traditions and idiosyncrasies that make Carmel what it is, but two-thirds of the people he’s talked to would prefer to have standard addresses. He also relayed a story in which, shortly after moving here eight years ago, his wife fell unconscious and was not breathing following treatment for leukemia, and when he dialed 911 in a panic, he couldn’t remember his directional address. Regardless, he agreed the voters should decide.

## Fighting the state

Delves advocated for more thorough vetting of the issues, rather than the “pieces of an answer” provided by councilwoman Karen Ferlito — a strong advocate for house numbers — in her research.

Hala said it comes down to what the residents want but that no one working on the city’s ambulance shouldn’t know where “Lincoln 3 southwest of Seventh” is.

Logan, however, said the council should pass a law decreeing that house numbers will never be imposed here — or not for the next thousand years, at least — and be done with it. With the technology available now, he offered, “I don’t think it’s that difficult to get the services we need.

On how to handle state legislators’ habit of handing down “one-size-fits-all” laws, Logan and O’Neil advocated for becoming a charter city, which they said would give the council more local control. That would not make Carmel exempt from state housing mandates, however. Monterey and Pacific Grove are charter cities, by they still have to adopt the controversial plans showing where and how they can accommodate the state’s housing allocations.



Hans Buder



Bob Delves



Danny Hala



Parker Logan



David O’Neil

Logan said the city should have fought the housing element requirements because Carmel is too densely populated already and needs to be protected, and O’Neil suggested one possible work-around is creating historic districts.

“We also need to lobby,” he said.

Buder said city attorney Brian Pierik “needs to step up, and when a new state mandate comes down the pike, we need to be alerted.” In addition, citizen committees could keep themselves informed. But, he noted, no jurisdiction has been successful in fighting the state’s housing laws.

“Elections have consequences, and I guess we keep getting what we deserve, in some respects,” commented Delves, who as a planning commissioner reviewed the housing element and recommended its adoption.

“It was a product that had been written by our staff and our consultants, but the words were being spoken by Sacramento,” he said. “It seemed to be their housing plan — we’re trying to turn that back into our plan.”

Hala said tax dollars should be used “for lobbying the state not to force us into conditions that will ruin the city,” including affordable housing, which he opposes.

“When you work your whole life to live here, that’s not fair,” he said.

## What to do with the CPD?

While most candidates said the Carmel Police station on Junipero is overdue for a major overhaul of some sort, Hala said “it’s very minimal what the police station needs” and suggested spending millions of dollars on it “would be a complete waste of the taxes you pay.” He said the money would be better spent fixing tripping hazards on sidewalks — a topic he repeatedly mentioned during the forum — and undergrounding utilities.

Conversely, Delves described the conditions in the building as “pathetic,” “disgraceful” and “embarrassing.”

“It has become absolutely urgent, and it’s going to cost some money to get it done,” he said. Rather than rebuilding or relocating, he supports a remodel.

“What an embarrassment that this hasn’t been done,” Logan said. “This should have been remodeled a decade ago. It shouldn’t be a topic. Move on with it and quit talking about it, OK?”

O’Neil, who volunteers with the police department, agreed, in a way, noting that Police Chief Paul Tomasi told him the remodel plans approved by the council before Covid “would have fixed all of their problems.” Instead, they were scrapped in favor of an updated analysis and review by an architectural firm specializing in police stations.

Buder said the conversation needs to differentiate “must haves” from “nice to haves,” and that he’d like to see estimates on per-square-foot costs of renovating vs. demolishing and rebuilding before making a decision on how to proceed.

## Government work

Over the years, the city council and other panels have increasingly relied on ad hoc committees — which include two councilmembers and are therefore not subject to open-meeting laws — to do deep-dives on certain topics, such as housing, ambulance service and the police station remodel.

Committee members research the issues with help from staff and then return to the full council with a report and suggestions based on what they’ve found.

Some candidates said they feel that process has yielded results that blindsided residents who were unaware of the discussions, and that constituents often feel like by the time an issue reaches the light of day, it’s already been decided.

“I’m afraid they’ve all followed a pattern of starting in some public setting and then making progress quietly out of plain sight and emerging with an answer that is unveiled at a city council meeting,” where the agenda is full and public comments are restricted to three minutes, Delves said.

“Most of the time, the solution that comes from that doesn’t reflect what the people in this community actually want,” Hala commented, a sentiment with which Logan agreed, particularly with regard to the elimination of outdoor dining parklets.

O’Neil advocated for citizen committees over ad hocs, and Buder said that while a smaller group’s examination of an issue can be useful, more important topics should be discussed by the full council in an open setting.

In addition to each making an opening and closing statement, candidates shared their views on capital spending, candidates shared their views on capital spending, commercial development, staffing and the city's infrastructure needs. They also fielded questions directed only at them.

To watch the forum in its entirety, visit [youtu.be/z4bEYMJ4RU4](https://youtu.be/z4bEYMJ4RU4).

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