

CSL's District 6: From acclamations to three-way race

By Joel Goldenberg, The Suburban, October 28, 2009

The hibernating election bear of Côte St. Luc's District 6 has finally stirred after a nearly 20-year sleep.

In every Côte St. Luc election from 1990 to 2005 — not counting the Côte St. HampWest merger vote — there has been no election in District 6, as longtime councillor Glenn Nashen was acclaimed in 1990, 1994, 1998 and 2005.

But now, District 6 is experiencing the most intense contest in this election, with a three-way race between Nashen, former journalist Charles Lugassy and Sonia Cohen-Peillon. Districts 4 and 5, represented by Steven Erdelyi and Allan Levine respectively, are in two-way races and the rest of council, including Mayor Anthony Housefather, have been acclaimed.

The race in District 6 just became hotter, with accusations flying about candidates' proximity to a mobile poll at the Caldwell Residence Monday. The Suburban received calls that the Lugassy side had to be ordered to leave the area, while Lugassy counters that the Nashen side was allowed to gain closer proximity to the polling station while he had to stand on the sidewalk. Nashen also e-mailed pictures to The Suburban of Lugassy signs covering his own.

Nashen, who is being supported by Housefather and all seven of his fellow councillors, is running on his record, especially in relation to his council portfolio of public security. This includes his joining Côte St. Luc's Emergency Medical Services 30-years ago, succeeding in saving EMS when its status was threatened, helping to keep police Station 9 and the fire station in Côte St. Luc, lobbying for safer crosswalks, initiating the city's bicycle helmet law and creating vCOPS (Volunteer Citizens on Patrol).

Nashen says he plans to create a "Community Emergency Response Team" for any disaster, and is working on bike paths, green redevelopment for Cavendish Mall, and the renovating of two District 6 parks, among other initiatives.

Lugassy says he has seen a lack of opposition in several districts over the years.

"We felt, since I am part of the Sephardic Jewish community which is 35 to 40 percent of Côte St. Luc's population, that it was about time we had a representative at city hall. But I want to emphasize that this is not, and will not be, a fight between the Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities. What we are stressing is fair representation at city hall. We have no conflict with other brothers — we are one community."

"I want to establish a security system, I have a plan in hand of how to make sure this community is protected against hooligans. I want to increase the patrols, it's unacceptable [Station 9] closes at 9 p.m. This is the most crucial time."

For her part, Cohen-Peillon recently told The Suburban that she entered the race because of what she perceived as a lack of visibility by Nashen, and the existence of a park named after him while he remains in office. She wrote in an e-mail that he and the other councillors who were honoured in this way "should have had the modesty to oppose such a project."

In her election material, she has contended that Côte St. Luc's taxes are one of the highest on the island, that its operating budget increased 84 percent and taxes 52 percent since 2001. Councillors Dida Berku and Ruth Kovac, both members of Côte St. Luc's finance committee, disputed her financial claims and figures.