

Joe Staler  
Organized Neighbors of Edgehill  
615-429-8272  
[joe@alohancr.com](mailto:joe@alohancr.com)

### **MAYORAL AND OTHER CANDIDATES ADDRESS ISSUES IN EDGEHILL BEFORE ELECTION**

*Mayor Briley, John Cooper, John Ray Clemmons, Julia Clark-Johnson and Other Candidates Speak at E.S. Rose Park*

Four Mayoral Candidates as well as candidates for Vice Mayor and At-Large Council seats attended Edgehill Community Day at E.S. Rose Park on Saturday, July 20. In a forum moderated by Tina Pool and Keith Floyd, co-hosts of *Fighting Against Bullying* on the NECAT Network, candidates responded to questions about Edgehill's local economy, gentrification, neighborhood involvement in land-use decisions, and respect for the area's African American history.

Responding to a question about gentrification and displacement, Mayor David Briley pointed to his recently announced "Under One Roof 2029" affordable housing initiative, including homes soon to be built in Edgehill after recently announced units in Cheatham Place. "We're working on that," said Briley, "to make sure that if you grew up in Edgehill or Cheatham Place, the growth of our city shouldn't push you out, and we're going to make sure there are units available that are affordable for everybody who lives in this community right now."

Asked about his vision for the future of Fort Negley, Briley said that he had announced in the first week of his administration that the site would be "preserved forever."

"If you look at the history of Nashville and go to all of our important sites, to be honest, the history there was primarily told by white folks, and so this is an opportunity for our African American community to come tell a history from their own perspective there, and I'm going to make sure that happens."

On respect for neighborhoods in land-use decisions, Mayoral Candidate John Ray Clemmons referred to his past role as President of the Belmont-Hillsboro neighborhood association as well as his current work to secure a state historical marker for the site of William Edmonson's home in Edgehill. Criticizing Nashville's current "failure to respect neighborhoods," Clemmons called for neighborhood representation on Metro commissions: "Right now we need people who are willing to step up, fight the spot-zoning, put neighborhood representatives on the boards, and make sure decisions are being made in the best interest of our city and protecting neighborhoods' character."

Clemmons also spoke passionately about his seven years on the board of directors of Nashville RBI (Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities). On access to fields for youth sports, he said, "It has been a problem for too long in this city that ball fields are not available. ... This is something that needs to be accessible because we need to make sure that our children have opportunities in safe, positive environments. And the ball fields of this city are key variables in that equation. As Mayor, I will work to protect Nashville's youth and make sure they are getting into more of these programs ..."

Responding to a question about gentrification, Mayoral Candidate John Cooper spoke directly to the issue of Belmont University and Rose Park. “The first thing is to keep your assets for the community. And don’t let some other group, whether it’s a respected university or Metro Government, take your assets. This is the most blessed part of Nashville.” He said that Council support for the community in resisting Belmont’s plans for a university building in the park had led to the university’s current plan to build on adjacent school property. “Belmont’s original batting cage proposal was not a cage; it was a building; and it was deceptive. I and others on the Council tried to help Edgehill push back on this enough to what happened is that they went into MNPS.” Describing E.S. Rose Park as “a treasure,” he added, “It needs to be a treasure for the community and for those ball teams and for our young people to have routine access back to their own facilities. And until that happens, an injustice has been done.”

If elected, Cooper promised to ensure accountability in MDHA leadership as the neighborhood faces a massive housing redevelopment: “I’m able to reappoint, or to appoint, MDHA directors who are going to listen to you. That’s a huge thing. You need to vote for me for that reason alone.” He called for “a different relationship with MDHA where you’re just not told what to do but in fact this community has a seat at the table.”

Mayoral candidate Julia Clark-Johnson expressed her commitment to the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for all neighborhoods: “I stand here on behalf of you and all residents of Davidson County whether or not they are rich, middle class, or poor, and I will provide the equal services across the board ...” Asked about Fort Negley, she said that she would be guided by the wishes of the people: “If you want it, it is here to stay, and I will stand in front of it as your Mayor before I allow anybody to touch it.”

Vice Mayor Jim Shulman said that he had opposed former Mayor Megan Barry’s plans for Fort Negley Park and said that he had also opposed the Belmont University lease of E.S. Rose Park for the same reason: “I was actually on the Council when this thing was done and voted against this because it is a limited amount of public space that belongs to the public. It does not belong to Belmont University, and I voted against it. It happened anyway, I know, but I voted against it.” Shulman said that he was unaware of Belmont’s recent excavation for construction next to the park.

*Other speakers at Edgehill Community Day included Vice Mayoral candidate Robert Sawyers Sr. and At-Large Council candidates Fabian Bedne, Howard Jones, Bob Mendes, Zulfat Suara, and Sheri Weiner. Other At-Large Council candidates in attendance at the event included Burkley Allen and Rueben Dockery.*

###