

Surprise mayor candidates square off in forum

Cline, Sartor tackle variety of topics in online Q&A event



COURTESY ZOOM

Kevin Sartor and Aly Cline sit with former Arizona Senate President Rick Gray for a nearly hour-long forum hosted by the Northwest Valley Chamber of Commerce on May 3.

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“ *What this election comes down to something very simple: Is it going to be the status quo?* **”**

KEVIN SARTOR | SURPRISE MAYORAL CANDIDATE

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Aly Cline highlighted her record as a city council member during the past four years, while Kevin Sartor said he hopes voters want a different voice to lead the city of Surprise.

The two mayoral candidates tried to distinguish themselves from each other in their first candidate forum on May 3. The Northwest Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce, formerly the Surprise Regional Chamber of Commerce, hosted the virtual event on Zoom, with topics ranging from public safety to traffic.

Cline, the one-term council member for the mostly senior-dominated District 2, detailed her three decades of business leadership and her accomplishments on council at the nearly hour-long question-and-answer session.

“I’m the only candidate with the experience necessary to hit the ground running and the commitment to give this job the full-time attention it deserves,” Cline said.

Sartor, a former chair of the Surprise Planning and Zoning Commission, detailed how he enlisted in the Army after 9/11 and eventually earned a bachelor’s degree in homeland security. He currently is the safety coordinator for the Dysart Unified School District.

“I’m a very humble man,” Sartor said. “If you ask my family, I’m probably too humble.”

Former Senate President Rick Gray, who is the government relations liaison for the chamber, moderated the online-only event, which is leading up to the July 30 primary election.

“What this election comes down to something very simple: Is it going to be the status quo?” Sartor said. “All these things Aly talks about that she is wanting to do, if she could have done them, already she would have. But she didn’t. Now it’s time for a new leader with a fresh perspective.”

Cline rejected Sartor’s contention, calling herself an experienced leader after leading companies and other organizations for 30 years. Cline serves on the Maricopa Association of Governments broadband and domestic violence committees as well as the Valley Metro Transportation Committee. She was also formerly chair of Surprise’s Business Education Subcommittee .

She cited public safety as a top priority, along with expanding transportation opportunities.

“We need to strike the right balance between funding essential city services and keeping Surprise an inexpensive place to live,” Cline said.

Sartor, who has lived in Greer Ranch since 2011, stressed the need to build roads that can withstand the capacity of growth that is coming.

“If an employee can’t get to where they want to go ... we have to be able to support our businesses by getting residents from where they’re at to the business,” Sartor said.

Cline, who has lived in The Grand since 2002, said she would like to see the WeRide microtransit program expanded. It currently offers \$2 rides to most residents who live in the central part of the city.

“I want to see us continue to expand them so people have more choices if they choose not to drive, or they’re not able to drive or they don’t have a car,” Cline said.

Sartor, 41, agreed public safety is a top priority.

“If you go out of your front door, you have to know that you’re safe,” Sartor said. “If you send your kids to school, you need to know they’re safe.”

He also wants attention on school safety, infrastructure, veterans rights and water.

“We need to ensure that we have a safe, reliable, redundant water system here in Surprise,” Sartor said.

Later, Cline asked Sartor if he knew the city already had a robust water system in place with 100 years of assured water.

“We have to continue to invest in our water infrastructure to continue to expand our water portfolio to make sure we’re ahead of the game,” Cline said.

The two candidates offered similar views on managing growth. Sartor pointed out growth has outpaced the city’s infrastructure and said as mayor he would make sure projects are not “leapfrogging one over another.”

Cline discussed the realities that the city’s hands are tied legally on approving certain projects that meet zoning requirements.

“We don’t have a way to prevent people from coming to the city or building in the city legally, but we do have a way to encourage the kind of building that we want,” Cline said.

The two also gave viewpoints on how they would make decisions on big projects for the city.

Sartor said his Army training would help with decision-making.

“We have to make sure we get that return on investment,” Sartor said.

Cline said she would look at the project holistically.

“If it’s a community decision, my first evaluation would be does it benefit the entire city as opposed to benefiting one small segment of that city,” Cline said.

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