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Suttle in agreeable mood for forum

■ The only mayoral candidate to show says yes to OTOC's list of objectives.

BY ERIN GRACE

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Democrat Jim Suttle, hands down, won Sunday's mayoral candidate forum in the Holy Name Catholic Church basement.

In part that's because he said yes to everything the event's host, Omaha Together One Community, asked for. It also didn't hurt that his two competitors, both Republicans, were no-shows.

Neither attorney and former mayor Hal Daub nor real estate executive Jim Vokal, a city councilman, attended the afternoon forum held in one of the hallowed halls of Omaha politics; a place that, two days after the popular Lenten Friday fish fry, still held the scent of fried food.

Omaha Together One Community is an activist group that draws from churches, schools and neighborhood associations. It had sparred with Daub during his days as Omaha's mayor.

But on Sunday, OTOC's leaders said that's history. Instead, they are pressing for expansions in the areas of neighborhood revitalization, police-community relations, activities for youths, economic security and jobs.

Suttle, a city councilman and retired engineer, said yes to the list, including restoring the police auditor; expanding the city summer recreation program, Sun Dawgs; and increasing the library's budget.

He also said he would find a way to add 1,000 manufacturing jobs, create a director of economic development position to draw "the right type of industry here," and work to decrease double-digit unemployment in parts of north Omaha. He didn't get into how to pay for the plans.

OTOC leaders plan to follow up with postcard mailings to both Vokal and Daub, asking for their positions. The members of the organization also plan to go door to door Saturday in the Holy Name neighborhood, offering residents candidate "scorecards."

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