Mayoral forum gets contentious

Mayor and challenger go head to head in candidate forum

By Conor Morris
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The first contested general election mayoral candidate forum in Athens in recent history was fittingly a contentious affair, with incumbent Mayor Steve Patterson, a Democrat, facing off against challenger Damon Krane, an independent and Democratic socialist.

In opening statements given during the forum at the Athens Public Library before a capacity audience of roughly 70 people, Krane and Patterson struck the tone that would be set for the night.

Patterson highlighted his history as a “public servant” – he’s a former City Council member, Ohio University associate professor of psychology and served with the U.S. Air Force – who said he has worked as mayor to bring business, university and community interests together in the city to strive for a common goal. He also highlighted his endorsements from the Central Labor Council of Southeast Ohio and AFSCME Ohio, as well as receiving the “Elected Official of the Year” award from the National Association of Social Workers.

Patterson noted that he has the ability to recognize when the city makes mistakes, and learn and grow from them.

“A public servant serves,” Patterson said. “Public service is not self-service, where your interests come before the community.”

Meanwhile, Krane said he wanted to show people that he’s more than just the “anti-slumlord guy,” and highlighted his history as an activist in the area for the past 24 years, advocating on behalf of “ordinary, disempowered people.” He moved to Athens 20 years ago to coach Nelsonville-York High School students on how to create a newspaper called Lockdown, he said, which survived the school district’s attempts at censorship. He also cited a long history of organizing OU students and Athens residents, with one major series of direct actions forcing the university to get in compliance with the federal Clery Act laws that involve reporting sexual assault.

Krane also co-founded the Athens Tenant Union, the Athens Mobile Vending Association, Continued on page 3

Mayoral candidates Damon Krane, left, the challenger, and Steve Patterson, the incumbent, participate in a candidates forum Tuesday evening at the Athens Public Library. The event was sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Athens County. Photo by Conor Morris.

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