

Election 2025: Kingston Common Council Ward 8 race features pair of newcomers

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KINGSTON, N.Y. — Residents in Ward 8 will be guaranteed to elect a new Common Council representative this election. The race features political newcomers Dustin Bryant, an independent candidate, facing Democrat Ruth Katz for the seat being vacated by longtime alderperson Steve Schabot.

Bryant, 41, who has never previously run for office, is a registered Democrat and is running as an Independent on the Common Ground Party Line. He is the owner of Planet Woodstock Music and Rondout Roasting Company, which he co-owns with his wife, Fiona McElroy, who is also the Kitchen Manager at Angel Food East.

Born in Kingston, Bryant graduated from Rondout Valley High School in 2002 and studied commercial recording at the Musicians Institute in Los Angeles. He has lived in Ulster County for 39 years and in Kingston since 2007.

Bryant is a board member of the non-profit Keegan Army Running Club, which raises funds for SUNY Ulster's Presidential Scholarship Fund for first-generation college students and other local charities. He is a member of White Eagle Benevolent Society and a volunteer driver for Angel Food East.

Bryant said he's running because he feels a strong sense of civic duty and pride for the city he loves. He added that Kingston needs "a true local voice at City Hall, someone who has lived the challenges, not just studied them."

Bryant said housing is his number one priority. He noted he's moved after rentals he lived in were sold, watched friends get priced out, and seen rents rise overnight. "Housing is about people and neighborhoods, not just 'units,'" he said. "We need balance: protect tenants, support small landlords who rent affordably, and bring down the overall cost of living by cutting unnecessary fees and inflated repair costs."

He added that Kingston should also focus on basics such as repairing sidewalks, paving roads, ensuring safe crosswalks, and maintaining city-owned properties over chasing flashy grant-funded projects that end up leaving the city with expensive-to-maintain liabilities like the Pike Plan. "Residents feel it every time a drain doesn't drain, a path isn't mowed, or a road is unsafe to walk or bike on," he said.

Bryant pledged to offer independent local leadership that is "not ideologically tied to one solution, one party or one organization."

Katz, 65, a registered Democrat, will appear on the Democratic line. She is also a political newcomer.

She is a grants manager at Upstate Films.

Katz graduated from Evanston Township High School in Evanston, Illinois, in 1978. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Carleton College and a master's degree in international development and social change.

Katz has lived in Kingston for eight years.

Katz is involved with Just Food, the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, Farm Aid, the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County. She is also involved with Upstate Films, Mothers & Others for a Livable Planet, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Rauch Foundation, the Trickle Up Program, and the Peace Corps.

Katz said she is running to put her career experience of “trouble-shooting community problems; collaborating with experts, neighbors, allied advocates and donors; and even going to bat for folks in the halls of Congress to work in City Hall.” Katz added she was inspired to run by the conversations she’s had with fellow city residents while canvassing for other candidates

Katz said affordable housing is her top priority in both her ward and citywide. “I personally met people from three different buildings in Ward 8 who were moving out because they could not afford their rent increases,” she added. “Also, we need to bring community members into the conversation early on in a timely manner, to learn from their feedback and insights when new developments are being proposed in their neighborhood.”

Katz said safety, including traffic and pedestrian safety, flooding and other weather-related issues, as well as addressing the abductions of immigrant neighbors who contribute greatly to the vitality of the community by ICE, are other top priorities.

She also called for collaboration with business owners to learn about challenges and opportunities and come up with creative solutions, along with working to get an affordable grocery store in Ward 8.

Katz also pledged to host monthly in-person meetings with Ward 8 residents and to focus on communication and collaboration as well as action through constituent services.

Election Day is Nov. 4. Early voting will begin Oct. 25 and will run through Nov. 2.