

Alsberry's work is great preparation for county board spot

BILL JONES
bjones@hfchronicle.com

Vernard L. Alsberry Jr. may be best known as the mayor of Hazel Crest. He is serving his ninth year in that position, but he grew up in the Altgeld Gardens public housing project on Chicago's South Side — and, more pertinently, within Cook County's 5th District — and attended nearby Carver High School.

When longtime District 5 Commissioner Deborah Sims announced her retirement from the office, Alsberry, 66, filed to run in the June 28 primary for the soon-to-be open seat. The district includes Flossmoor.

"The district actually encompasses where my childhood was and where I live now," Alsberry said. "I think it gives me a unique perspective of the needs of the region. ... With my experience and wanting to really give back to the community I came from, I thought it was a great opportunity."

Alsberry holds a bachelor's degree in health administration and a master's degree in public administration, both from Governors State University. He also has an associate degree in physical therapy. He is a licensed



Vernard L. Alsberry Jr.

5th District.

"The district is now coming into its own," Alsberry said. "We've had years of the Southland region struggling. Now, with the influx of intermodals, new business, some land growth with new businesses coming out here ... with my relationships over the years that I've established at the federal, county and local levels, I'm able to maneuver us through this much-needed time post-pandemic to make sure we get the services and ad-

physical therapist assistant in Illinois and Indiana.

In addition to his experience as mayor, Alsberry served two terms as trustee in Hazel Crest. He hopes to expand the work he has done in the village to more of the South Suburbs and South Side neighborhoods that make up the

vocacy we need through Cook County."

"I've always been an advocate for the whole Southland region," Alsberry said. "I think that perspective and activity with those organizations ... assist me in being able to represent the whole region."

"I think it's important we move into this open seat that's been held for 28 years with someone who understands or has relationships throughout the state, federal and county levels, who has been involved throughout the region, and has established organizations and worked with non-for-profits and the clergies to actually address all the issues in the Southland region."

Alsberry said the biggest problem he sees in Cook County, especially in the Southland, is violence — particularly gun violence and carjackings. Alsberry said he would work with the county to find ways to address that issue, as well as health care concerns amplified by the pandemic.

Alsberry said he also wants to seek an "economic engine of support" to help decrease taxes in the Southland. Economic growth will help take the burden off property owners, he said.

He applauded Sims for her 28 years

of service to the district, saying he thinks anyone who steps into a position like this must have the best of the region at heart.

Alsberry's campaign site notes his core values are integrity, excellence and "service before self," the last of which he has adopted as a campaign slogan.

Among the numerous organizations with which he has been involved are the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and Illinois Municipal League, the Advocate South Suburban Hospital Governing Council, Southland Partnership, Southland Regional Mayoral Black Caucus, Southland Development Authority, South Suburban Land Bank and Development Authority, Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce, and Hazel Crest American Legion Post 398. He is a veteran of the United States Air Force.

Alsberry said if elected commissioner of Cook County's 5th District, he does not think the position is compatible with his current role as mayor, but he was still researching his options. For more information about Alsberry, visit alsberry.org.

McClinton aims to bring 'a fresh face, new voice' to county

BILL JONES
bjones@hfchronicle.com

As far as Jaylin D. McClinton is concerned, it's time for a change.

McClinton has seen Cook County's 5th District represented by the same person for his entire life. When Commissioner Deborah Sims announced her retirement, he saw the other emerging candidates for the open seat as "more of the same and politics of the past." So, McClinton, 28 and a lifelong resident of Chicago's Roseland neighborhood, decided to run in the June 28 primary. Flossmoor is in the 5th district.

"For me it was an opportunity to usher in a new way of thinking, a fresh face, a new voice and a new perspective," McClinton said. "We need leaders in office who are going to show up to every single aspect and portion of this district in a way that really lives up to the public service values that I personally subscribe to and believe in."

McClinton, a graduate of Curie Metropolitan High School, went on to earn a bachelor's degree in Afri-

can-American studies and political science, with a concentration in pre-law, at the University of Illinois. He completed law school in May at the Chicago-Kent College of Law, Illinois Institute of Technology. As a lawyer, he hopes to focus on plaintiff-side consumer protection, making sure people's privacy rights are not infringed upon.

Though he has never served in an elected position (other than a student position on the Board of Trustees at U. of I.), McClinton is no stranger to politics. He worked as a White House intern during President Barack Obama's administration. He was chief of staff to then-State Rep. Juliana Stratton and worked as a community organizer for the Obama Foundation.

McClinton sees the District 5 seat as an opportunity to have a true say in things that will impact people's lives in a unique region. He wants to help create progressive policy that works for everyday people.

McClinton said his experience as a community organizer and soon-to-be lawyer makes him well suited to bring a young, energetic approach to the job.



Jaylin D. McClinton

"We're not going to solve the problems of today with the same kind of solutions that have already been offered," McClinton said. "I represent a new way of doing things in this region."

McClinton said health care is a huge priority, especially in the midst of a pandemic. He wants to continue encouraging vaccination and boosters. Some people in the district do not have access to clean drinking water, and there is a lack of access to hospitals close to some communities, he added. In addition to addressing those issues, McClinton said gun violence needs to be treated like the public health crisis it is, while also addressing criminal justice reform.

McClinton said there are a lot of

opportunities to bring economic development resources to the region. His aim is growth without pushing families of the 5th District out of their homes, McClinton said.

He hopes a recently passed \$8 billion county budget can help solve these Southland issues. "How do we make sure the 5th District of Cook County gets its fair share?" McClinton asked.

McClinton said the county needs to repurpose houses instead of just boarding them up. He wants to take advantage of green spaces, too. And he looks to accomplish these goals by tapping into the skill sets of the Southland's own residents, meeting people where they are to address their needs.

"My bottom line is showing up and being a true advocate for the people of this district," McClinton said. "I'm not running for anything else. I'm running for Cook County commissioner because I want to show up for people. For far too long, this region of Cook County has gotten the short end of the stick."

For more information about McClinton, visit jaylindmclinton.com.