

Holyoke City Councilor Kevin Jourdain slams Parks and Recreation Commission nominee; cites 2014 DUI arrest

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HOLYOKE — Councilor at-large Kevin Jourdain strongly opposes Nicholas A. Duclos serving on the Parks and Recreation Commission, citing a 2014 drunken driving arrest.

For most of Wednesday's interview, the council's Public Service Committee appeared respectful to Duclos' serving on the commission. Councilor at-large Joseph M. McGiverin said Duclos' background "fit perfect" for the commission.

If appointed, Duclos would serve the remaining term of Councilor at-large Israel Rivera.

In March 2014, Duclos drove Mayor Alex B. Morse's city-issued vehicle around the streets of Northampton before being pulled over and arrested by police. He [pleaded sufficient facts](#) for a finding of guilty on two of those charges and "responsible" on the other four, fined \$300 and lost his driver's license for 45 days.

A lifelong Holyoke resident, Duclos said, "I chose to stay and raise my family here because I truly believe in the community as a whole and the direction the city is going. I look forward to the opportunity to volunteer my time and help the Parks and Recreation Commission."

Duclos said his three children enjoy the city's parks, and he wants them to participate in youth sports.

However, Jourdain said he would be "derelict" in his duty to vote "yes" on the appointment, citing the applicant's reported 2014 drunken driving arrest. He spoke with Mayor Joshua Garcia about concerns and "well-documented" issues about Duclos. "I'm a little stunned, quite frankly, by this appointment," he said.

Jourdain read excerpts from the Northampton Police report about Duclos' actions in 2014. Morse claimed Duclos, his cousin, took the car keys without permission. As a result, Duclos was charged with operating under the influence of alcohol and other moving violations.

"This is so over the top, so wrong on so many levels. It was an embarrassment to the City of Holyoke," he said. "It's absolutely outrageous conduct, and I feel we sweep it under the rug with a confirmation vote of this gentleman."

Jourdain reiterated he would not vote for Duclos' appointment to a public commission and that the applicant fails the "good character" standard based on past conduct. "It sends the message to others, 'you can do whatever you want, forget about it.'"

Duclos responded, "I understood full well what I did and the mistake I made when I was 22-years old. That was over eight years ago, and I live with that every day. Thank God I didn't kill anybody. You're absolutely right. I thank God every day and am thankful that did not happen."

"I made a mistake. People make mistakes, and I believe something that makes America great, which I believe something you're (Jourdain) is interested in, Making America Great," Duclos

said. “We believe in retribution and people overcoming the mistakes they made in the past and show that their character after they make mistakes is the most important thing.”

Duclos hoped the decisions he had made since the arrest were positive and that a person’s life was not defined by one event. Since 2014, he has served in the Air Force National Guard, attended college and become a father and homeowner.

Duclos stated that he heard “rumblings” about Jourdain’s past and chose not to bring it up. He noted Jourdain was also a father, involved in public service, and believed a single event did not define the city councilor’s life.

He reminded the committee he was applying for a volunteer position. “Outside of that one event, I am more than qualified to serve in this position,” he said. “I believe the City of Holyoke as a whole does not agree with you (Jourdain). I hope they don’t agree with you.”

Councilor At-large Peter Tallman, the committee’s chair, said everyone had made mistakes in the past. “We got to move forward from what we’ve done and try to be better persons each day,” he said. “I see a Nick that has turned his life around and a person who can be beneficial and helpful to this community and the work he wants to do with the Parks and Recreation Department.”

Tallman reminded councilors that Duclos was applying for a city board and was not before a U.S. Senate committee seeking a judgeship.

Ward 4 Councilor Kocayne Givner said the council should not spend its time “digging up dirt” on “people who have very good intentions” and who want to contribute to the community. “It’s a privilege to serve on these boards, but it also requires privilege,” she said.

Givner and Ward 1 Councilor Jenny Rivera indirectly referenced a sitting city councilor who was stopped operating under the influence. Both said they would vote “yes” for Duclos’s appointment.

Jourdain countered he was “not digging up dirt” as the incident was reported widely in the media. and Jacqueline Watson applied for positions on the board.