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Press Release: The Evolution of the O'Fallon-Shiloh Candidate Forum

For over 20 years, the O'Fallon-Shiloh Chamber of Commerce has proudly provided candidate forums as a **community service**, offering residents an opportunity to hear directly from those seeking public office. The forums have always been designed to be **informational in nature**, focusing on impartiality and fairness, rather than a platform for debate.

Traditionally, the Chamber has hosted forums for various local offices, including **city and village mayors, village trustees, school board members, and city council representatives**. These events provided candidates the opportunity to address a range of topics relevant to their respective roles, from **governance and fiscal responsibility to community development and educational priorities**. Over time, however, the forums occasionally shifted toward a more debate-like atmosphere, which sometimes overshadowed the original goal of providing voters with clear and impartial insights into each candidate's vision.

To better serve the evolving needs of our community, the Chamber is introducing a podcast format that offers greater accessibility and flexibility, ensuring voters can engage with candidate information on their own time and terms. The new **618Now Candidate Forum Podcast** brings the true vision of the forums to life by offering candidates an opportunity to deliver **educated and well-informed answers** to critical questions, rather than having to think quickly in a high-pressure environment.

"We never intended for the forums to become debates; our goal has always been to provide voters with impartial, accessible information to make informed decisions," said Debbie Arell-Martinez, President/CEO of the O'Fallon-Shiloh Chamber of Commerce. "This new podcast format allows us to fulfill that mission while adapting to how people consume information today."

With the rise of **on-demand content** such as podcasts and social media platforms, people now expect to access information **when and where it's most convenient for them**. This shift in consumer behavior, combined with the Chamber's desire to create an atmosphere that truly informs voters, made it clear that an evolution in format was necessary.

While the in-person component has been removed, the accessibility and quality of information have been **vastly improved**. Voters can now listen at their convenience, revisit discussions as needed, and hear directly from candidates in a structured, distraction-free environment.

The Chamber continues to encourage other organizations and candidates to host **in-person meet and greets or forums** to supplement the podcast and provide additional opportunities for community engagement.

"We believe this new approach will provide greater accessibility and reach, helping more residents stay informed about their candidates," said Arell-Martinez, "However, we fully support community-driven efforts to host additional in-person events that align with their needs."

The O'Fallon-Shiloh Chamber of Commerce is committed to providing voters with accessible and informative resources to help them make informed decisions. We invite all residents to tune in to the **2025 618Now Candidate Forum Podcast**, launching in March, and learn more about the candidates shaping the future of our community.

For the latest updates and to listen to podcast episodes, visit our website at **ofallonchamber.com** or follow us on social media **@ofallonchamber**.

About 618Now Podcast

618Now is a podcast presented by the O'Fallon-Shiloh Chamber of Commerce, designed to keep residents informed and engaged with local topics that matter most. Covering community events, business insights, and local government updates, 618Now serves as an accessible resource for staying connected with the O'Fallon and Shiloh communities. Episodes are available on major podcast platforms, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Amazon Music.

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