

Ward 1 priorities

Forum poorly attended but informative

By Dan Nienaber

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After subtracting the three candidates, the three Greater Mankato Growth employees and a reporter, there were three people left in a section of East High School's auditorium Wednesday to watch a forum for those hoping to fill the City Council's Ward 1 seat.

Of those left, one was a candidate's husband, one was another candidate's neighbor and the third guy, who didn't want to be identified, was there to ask the only question of the night that was specific to Ward 1. He wanted to know what the candidates would do about the parking problems on Hosanna Avenue created by families flocking to the neighborhood for baseball and softball games at Thomas Fields.

He said he liked what he heard from Tim Adams, Karen Foreman and Cynthia Frederick. The fourth candidate running, Najwa Massad, missed the forum because she was on a previously planned vacation.

Frederick said she would talk to the Cougar Estates homeowners concerned about the problem and try to find a solution, but pointed out that occasional crowds should be expected in the neighborhood near East High School.

"When you live across from a school, you run the risk of these things happening," she said.

Adams also said he'd "strap up the dog" and take a walk through the neighborhood to see the problem first-hand. Then he would talk to those concerned and find out the legal requirements before settling on a solution. He added that it is a good thing to have a problem caused by a lot of people using a publicly-funded facility.

It was a problem Foreman said she was already aware of because she had been knocking on doors in the neighborhood. Her solution would start with a neighborhood meeting, she said.

Although the audience was small during the forum, Jonathan Zierdt, Greater Mankato Growth president and chief executive officer, reminded the candidates that people were paying attention to their answers to about a dozen questions that he had selected. The forum will be shown later on public access television.

When asked what their first priority would be if elected, both Adams and Foreman said it would be to set their priorities. That would include identifying services the city must provide, then determining how to spend any funds that are left over.

"This will be very short and very sweet," Frederick said in her response to the same question. "I'm going to rip through the budget."

She said the budget is too thick and needs to be gone through with a "fine-tooth comb" because it is "leaking."

Another question about how much financing the city should provide for "community livability" projects — such as parks, art and cultural events — brought unanimous praise for the city's parks and criticism of the Verizon Wireless Center

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SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS: City Council Ward 1 candidates discuss parking, city services and spending priorities



John Cross

City Council Ward 1 candidates Tim Adams, Karen Foreman and Cynthia Frederick (from left) responded to questions from Jonathan Zierdt, Greater Mankato Growth president and chief executive officer, during a forum at East High School Wednesday.

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FORUM: Homeowner classes in question

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situation. Adams said the civic center has become a “money pit” and the city should seriously look at turning it over to a private entity that could make it profitable. Before saying that the civic center lost about \$1 million last year, Foreman suggested having more afternoon concerts and events at the facility so older residents would be willing to attend.

“Ditto on everything,” Frederick said.

The candidates had differing ideas about how to make city government more efficient.

Frederick would have the city quit offering firsttime homeowner education classes. Real estate agents could do a better job of providing that information to people new to the housing market, she said.

Many of the city’s services could be better served by private businesses, Adams said. If there are more than three businesses “in the phone book” who provide a service offered by the city, they should be asked to bid for the city work because they’re probably more efficient, he said.

Foreman said the city is already doing a good job of cutting staff needs by using the Internet, but she would find ways to increase the city’s online options.

The candidates also gave different reasons for running when they were asked why serving the city would be worth the time commitment.

Adams said he has always “felt a duty” to serve the community and make Mankato better.

When Foreman lived in west Mankato, the city decided to add sidewalks to her neighborhood. She and others weren’t happy, so they started talking to city officials and found ways to improve the plans.

That was the beginning of her interest in becoming a council candidate. “I found that to be a very good experience,” she said. Frederick, a tanning business owner, said it was a “sneaky tax” that tanning customers are now required to pay that sparked her run for council. The federally mandated tax charges an extra 10 percent for tanning sessions. She complained to her elected officials,

who have only responded with form letters.

"I'm really, really upset with government right now," she said.

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