

## **Candidates Forum**

### **Meeting Notes**

**Wednesday, April 23, 2008**

President Bill Thomasson called the meeting to order at 7:04pm. Tonight's meeting was a forum for city council and mayoral candidates running for election on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Each candidate had six minutes to address one question. If you had the authority to implement one action that would have a positive economic and developmental impact on the Roanoke Valley – what would it be and why? The candidates' names were drawn randomly for their turn to speak.

Former Mayor David Bowers, currently running for mayor, called attention to the prior economic growth that he and his administration brought to Roanoke: the re-opening of the Hotel Roanoke and Conference center, development along Rte. 460, expansion to the Valley View area, and the biomedical center on the Reserve Avenue area, just to name a few. As far as the future, he is not in favor of a riverfront site for the new amphitheater. He believes that it should be built in the current Elmwood Park. He is also in favor of renovating the city market stalls, Center in the Square, and the City Market building. He believes that he is the best salesman for the Roanoke and the valley.

Anita Price is running for city council. She is currently a guidance counselor for Round Hill Montessori School in RCPS. She believes in the importance of supporting local small businesses located in different localities in Roanoke. She would like to see more areas patterned after the Grandin Road area – growing from the inside out - specifically in the underserved areas.

Brian Wishneff is running for re-election for city council. He doesn't think that we've had measurable economic growth over the last eight years. He doesn't think that we currently have an "A" team leading our valley and until we do, we will not be able to have any growth.

Dale Edmonston is running for city council. He believes that we all need to work together across party lines to improve economic problems in Roanoke.

Mayor Nelson Harris is running for re-election. He believes that making a stronger link between the city of Roanoke and Virginia Tech will have a prosperous outcome for our area. Specifically, the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center partnering with the city could bring more jobs to the area. He spoke about the new medical school coming to Roanoke as an important addition to the economy. A new partnership with local businesses and city schools is forthcoming. Classes will be offered to students interesting in learning a technical trade. Some businesses have already promised to provide jobs to



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those students completing the vocational/technical track (Breakell Construction and Trane, to name two.)

Court Rosen is running for city council. He thinks that the number one way to make a positive economic impact is in our city schools. He advocates putting in a strong vocational/technical program. In 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades, students could rotate through different training classes until they found the career that they are most interested in pursuing (electrician, carpenter, chef, etc.) Then in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade, they become trained with a career in mind. This program could be partnered with Virginia Western Community College, so that the end result is an Associate's Degree with training for a life-long career.

George Sgouros is running for mayor. He doesn't believe that we should only rely upon Virginia Tech and Carilion for employment in this area. We should use the resources that we already have instead of trying to bring in new companies; we should try to employ the people already in Roanoke rather than try to bring in new people.

Anita Powell is running for mayor. She believes that we should focus on having jobs for our young people to keep them in Roanoke after graduation from school. She supports vocational training in schools. She believes that our airport should be improved (less flight waiting time and cheaper fares.)

Sherman Lea is running for re-election for city council. He believes that young people are already coming back to settle in Roanoke after graduation. He said that the bottom line is that we must increase our tax base in order to bring more income to the city. We must attract more people to Roanoke to purchase upscale homes, which will bring more income tax to our budget. He would like to see a blended income living in downtown – higher priced condos along side less expensive apartments.

Valerie Garner is running for city council. She supports a strong vocational training in city schools. She also thinks that we should be thinking globally as far as increasing revenue to Roanoke. Financially supporting an abandoned warehouse and setting up a worldwide distribution center would be profitable to our city.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 pm; there were 30 people in attendance.

Stewart Putney  
Secretary  
Neighbors In South Roanoke

