

# Sea Isle Voters Query Council Candidates

By JOE HART

SEA ISLE CITY — The Sea Isle City Taxpayers Association (SICTA) introduced most of the 20 council candidates to over 150 concerned voters over the weekend.

On April 14 at the Community Lodge on JFK Boulevard, 17 candidates broke up into panels to introduce themselves and answer questions from the audience.

Candidates Joseph LaRosa, Herbert Ruhl and Robert Hunter did not participate in the forum.

Candidates were placed into one of the three panels — business development, parking/streets and communication — at random.

The business development panel included candidates Mike McHale, Mary Tighe, Louis Feola Jr., Cornelius Byrne Jr., Michael Cardinale and Robert DiIorio.

McHale and Tighe, who are running on the "Restore the Spirit of Sea Isle" ticket together, focused on the city's need for more effective zoning laws and enforcement to help bring new business to the city.

They said the current code wasn't business friendly.

"Right now the zoning code allows one apartment over a first floor commercial property in the downtown business district," McHale said. "That isn't enough to make it feasible in for the owner in most cases."

DiIorio, Byrne and Feola also said the city needed to be more flexible for the business community and try to extend the tourist season, but also remain a family friendly place.

Cardinale challenged Sea Isle's residents to help support local businesses.

"If you want businesses to be open year round," he said, "you people have to support them."

The parking and streets panelists were candidates John Fee, Agnes Clemente, John Divney, Joe Matyszczak, Terence Libro and William Kehner.

One resident asked a question that brought up paving city-owned land for

parking.

Clemente said, with the city looking into trolley service to take people to the beaches and downtown in the summer, paving different area for parking away from the beaches would make a lot of sense.

Divney and Matyszczak agreed but suggested creating a citizens advisory committee to discuss the pros and cons of using city land for parking.

Kehner said the advisory committee was a good idea in the long term, but said there were some quick fixes they could do to address the problem for this season.

He also said the city should look into possible casino redevelopment grants for a parking garage to be built.

Fee said the garage idea was interesting, but needed to be thoroughly researched.

Libro said the city should take out the parking meters not being utilized on 28th Street saying people would use them if they were free.

Another question focused on when Central Avenue would be fixed.

"When my grandchildren are down they get a free rollercoaster ride on Central Avenue," Matyszczak joked.

Fee said there was a road repair schedule in existence in the city, but only Engineer Andrew Previti knew what it was.

Kehner explained that the road was dug up in the 1960s and was not replaced correctly.

He said he would call for a complete infrastructure review to determine what the state of the city's roads was.

Other candidates agreed, but said they wouldn't want to have to increase taxes to pay for extensive road repairs.

So much against increasing taxes, Libro and Clemente said they wouldn't be taking a salary if they were elected to council.

The communication panel included Robert Doyle, Edward Sgallo, Angelo Camano, Richard Dominic and Frank Edwardi.

Panelists were asked

how they would improve communication in the city.

Dominic borrowed an idea from Edwardi about putting a newsletter in with residents' water bills.

Camano said he would have an open-door policy for citizens to voice their concerns to him.

"We have to ask the residents of Sea Isle what they want their city to be," Sgallo said. "And then act on their wishes."

Boyle suggested the city utilize its Web site to better communicate its message.

The candidates also suggested extending City Hall hours into the evening and on the weekends to allow citizens better access to government officials.

Boyle said they should also consider rotating meeting times between days, nights and even weekends so more people could attend.

Police Chief and Emergency Management Coordinator William Kennedy interrupted the forum to announce a state of emergency for the coming nor'easter storm.

He said he was passing by and saw all of the cars parked in the Lodge's parking lot and thought he would inform everyone of the situation.

Coastal flooding and high winds were expected and he would be activating all appropriate emergency resources, he said.

He said the Ocean View Firehouse in Dennis Township would be used as the designated shelter for city residents.

He suggested that residents secure outside furniture and crack storm windows before evacuating the island to stay with friends or relatives off shore or in the shelter.

He said they would be video taping the beaches in case of any erosion that might occur.

When he was finished with his announcement, Dominic brought up a major concern.

"This is a perfect example of the lack of communication in this city," he said. "While I appreciate the chief stopping by to inform us, if we weren't

here, we wouldn't know any of this."

Most of the panelists agreed that hiring a qualified city administrator would help solve the city's communication problem, but Sgallo told the attendees not to expect too much.

"The administrator won't be a panacea," he said. "He won't come in here with a halo on his head and everything will be magically fixed."

He also warned against looking for quick fixes.

"Quick fixes are what got us in the fix that we're in," he said.

SICTA President Tom Henry thanked the candidates for attending and audience for being involved.

Another forum for the mayoral candidates will be held in the Sea Isle Elementary School on April 19 hosted by the Women's Civic Club and the second SICTA council meeting is set for April 28 at the Townsends Inlet Civic Center.