

Borough Assembly Candidates Share Ideas, Answer Questions During Forum

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

When Kodiak residents head to the ballot box on October 1, there will only be one major contested race for them to decide. Three candidates are vying for two seats on the Borough Assembly: current Assemblywoman Carol Austerman, Frank Peterson and Dennis Symmons.

The trio took up most of Tuesday's candidate forum, which was hosted by the Kodiak Chamber of Commerce. Each candidate answered questions ranging from why they are running, to specific thoughts on ballot measures and borough projects.

Peterson, who grew up in villages surrounding Kodiak, talked about what he thought the role of the borough assembly is within Kodiak.

"I think that first and foremost it's an advocate. You know we are the public's hammer if you will. The public is supposed to utilize us; we're supposed to utilize them as a borough assembly. We make the decisions; we make sure that everything is in the best interest of the community, not just individuals. We take all of the input that we can from the entire borough and work our hardest, work our best to make sure that those needs are met that those desires are sought after. So it's public service."

Austerman currently sits on the housing task force and said, if elected, she would want to continue looking for solutions to the affordable housing problem in Kodiak.

"And that has been a project that has been a project that has been very important to me is to figure out a way that we can start making our housing costs more reasonable in Kodiak. Another thing that I am hoping to work on is some food sustainability issues and maybe working on putting together some type of community garden that is co-opted somehow with the borough and or the city. I think that we have an issue being on an island with food sustainability and safety issues and it's very important that we start bringing those issues to the forefront and figuring out a way to deal with those as well."

When asked about school district funding, Symmons said he felt like the borough spends a little too much money on the district and more

scrutiny from the assembly is needed for high dollar projects like the high school.

It's great what children get here. I mean this is the utopian society when it comes to education. I like it when the assembly scrutinizes these big chunks of money. As well as the emcee knows, I was not for spending what's probably going to be \$100 million, we probably could have built a new school and I don't mean to insult anybody when I say that but I really do believe when it's all said and done the high school is going to cost way more than we thought.

During last night's forum other candidates for other uncontested races read statements introducing them to the Kodiak public. Jerrol Friend is running unopposed for borough mayor. Pat Branson is also running unopposed for the position she currently holds as city mayor. Assemblymen Charlie Davidson and John Whiddon are also seeking reelection for their current City Council seats.