



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 7th, 2019

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St. Tammany West Chamber & Covington Business Association Engages Community with Candidate Forum

Covington, LA – February 7th, 2019 – The St. Tammany West Chamber and the Covington Business Association worked together in hosting a mayoral and council at large candidate forum spotlighting issues and concerns affecting the downtown Covington area as well as infrastructure concerns impacting local business. The goal of the forum was to increase voter turnout and help residents of the city of Covington make a more informed vote.

Mike Nicaud of Hornbeck Offshore Services began the forum by thanking the 300 people in attendance. Russ Cantrelle of Hancock Whitney Bank moderated the event with questions centered on infrastructure, community development, drainage issues, historic preservation and more.

Participating Council At-Large candidates were Jerry Lee Coner, Patrick McMath and Larry Rolling. The candidates were asked to identify priorities of what they hope to accomplish if elected. McMath stated “Being an Ambassador for Covington, supporting local organizations and local events is key. This is a special place and we need to properly manage our growth and keep up with the infrastructure demands.” “Retention for our business community is important, these businesses are the heartbeat of our community” said Rolling, finishing with his tagline “Keep Covington Rolling”. Coner ended with “Service is passion, we need to focus on a transportation system, infrastructure and better service to our citizens.”

Participating Mayoral candidates were Mark Johnson, Rick Smith & Candace Watkins. Johnson stated, “Many plans being made for our area are being made at a Parish level which is why we need a liaison position created to work with the Parish & DOTD to help get Covington issues heard.” Johnson also stated “Covington has a special charm and I have a goal to protect and improve that. I plan to meet with council members and help them accomplish their plans while also continuing to work on improving the West 30’s.”

Current Councilman Rick Smith says “Our business community will stay successful and continue to grow as long as we have an easily available mayor, which I plan to be. To help business it’s all about communication. Business owners have the best ideas and they need a place to come to when they need assistance. The mayor’s office should be their customer service office so we can assist them with any needs.” Smith also stated, “Safety is also a main concern of mine and quality of life for our families is being interrupted due to drainage issues which we have plans in the works to get to the bottom of those issues.”

Former mayor of Covington, Candace Watkins is also a mayoral candidate for this year's election. Watkins mentioned "I want to reinstate the Mainstreet Program which focuses on organization, design, promotion, recruitment & retention for the city." Watkins also mentioned "We have a current lack of planning in the city. We need to begin updating the master plan which is in this year's budget, we need to approach development, drainage and traffic issues and we need a downtown development employee on the payroll to focus on this."

Mayoral candidate Timothy O'Hara was invited to participate but chose not to for personal reasons. Early voting will be held Saturday, March 10th through Saturday, March 17th and election day is March 30th, 2019.



Left Picture: Townsend Underhill, James Richardson, Mike Nicaud, Micheal Hunley, Dan Cobb
Right Picture: Mayoral candidates Mark Johnson, Rick Smith, Candace Watkins

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