

Residents to hopefuls: Stop crime



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Citing violence, drugs and prostitution, residents spoke out Tuesday night against crime and asked six candidates seeking the District 7 seat on the East Baton Rouge Parish Metro Council to find a way to stop it.

"I support additional funding to our first responders for public safety," candidate Kim Dunn said at the candidates forum. "Plus, we need more community policing. Police need to be visible in communities, not just when we have crimes."

District 7 Councilman Byron Sharper, a Democrat seeking re-election, has six challengers in the Oct. 4 primary: Dunn, Paul Brumfield, Suchitra S. Dyer, C. Denise Marcelle and Isaiah Marshall, all Democrats, and Andrew Danna, who is not affiliated with a political party and who did not attend the forum.

District 7 is generally bounded by Weller Avenue and Clayton to the north, Perkins Road, Bawell Street and College Drive to the south, Plank Road, Scenic Highway, South Acadian Thruway and St. Rose Avenue to the west and North Foster Drive, North Ardenwood Drive and Airline Highway to the east.

Besides crime, residents also spoke out against blighted property.

Sharper, citing his experience, challenged those candidates who claim no one has been looking out for the constituents of District 7.

"When my friends say Councilman Sharper hasn't done anything, I beg to differ," Sharper said. "I'm out there every day. People talk about blight. ... I'm on the phone every day with the parish attorney about houses that need to be torn down. It's not that easy. It's a process."

In addressing the crime issue, most of the six candidates Tuesday talked about the need for more community programs for youth.

Marcelle said she wants to look into a new park in the Choctaw area.

"You have to channel their (the youth's) energy into other areas," Marcelle said.

Brumfield talked about the need for more street lighting in the district.

Dyer said there is no way to create a safe district for people to raise their children without the community and their public servant working together.

Marshall spoke about fighting crime by creating more opportunities for young people, including more accessible GED programs.

The forum, held at St. Paul Catholic Church on Gus Young Avenue, is one of six sponsored by the Working Interfaith Network, an organization working through 29 church congregations across the greater Baton Rouge area.

The next WIN forum, for the Metro Council District 5 candidates, will be held Sept 4 at St. Gerard Majella Catholic Church on Plank Road.

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