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## Candidates air views on growth, environment

By Amanda Nalley • DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER  
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City and county commissioners as well as mayoral candidates gathered Thursday at City Hall to answer questions about environmental policy, energy, sustainability and growth management at a forum hosted by the Big Bend Environmental Forum and the League of Women Voters of Tallahassee.

The 2 1/2-hour forum began with city commission candidates for seats 3 and 5 and mayoral candidates. They were followed by Leon County commission candidates for the District 5 and at-large seats.

The big topics of the evening for both city and county were not the effects of the Gulf oil spill but urban infill, stormwater management and transportation, and of course the role they play with regard to the struggling economy.

"We need to utilize what transportation we have already," said mayoral candidate Larry Hendricks, who lambasted the recent bus system overhaul by saying the StarMetro transit agency changed its name and repainted buses, but didn't increase frequency or routes.

"We have the idea of building roads, but we need to learn how to move people more efficiently," added Mayor John Marks.

Mayoral candidate Steve Stewart then put Marks and Hendricks on the spot by asking if they would drop their car allowance and get a bus pass.

Hendricks quickly responded, "I have one." Marks attempted an answer, but was cut off.

Candidates were asked a series of questions by the Big Bend Environmental Forum as well as the 60 or so residents who attended the meeting.

"I didn't know much about many of the candidates, so I came out to hear them and put a face with their name," said Martina Taylor as to why she came out.

Taylor said she hadn't made any major decisions yet

about which candidates she'd support.

Nervous laughter spread across the room when the panel was asked to raise their hands if they believed the Fallschase development on Mahan Drive was a mistake.

All but David Ward for District 5 and Rick Malphurs for At Large raised their hands. Commissioner Bob Rackleff quickly responded "It wasn't a mistake. It was a crime."

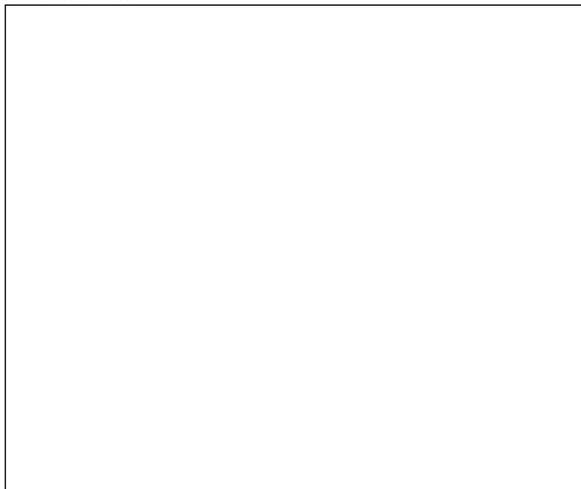
District 5 candidate Kristin Dozier agreed.

Ward responded what's done is done, and asked why the county doesn't do something to utilize that space instead of moving facilities to Tom Brown Park.

Nick Maddox, candidate for the at-large seat, was unable to make the meeting because of a family emergency.

A second forum featuring candidates from Florida House District 9, Florida Senate District 6 and U.S. House District 2 will be Aug. 12 from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at Tallahassee City Hall, 300 S. Adams St., in the commission chambers on the second floor. A candidate meet-and-greet will start at 5:45 p.m.

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City and county commission candidates met Thursday at City Hall to participate in the Big Bend Environmental Forum. (AMANDA NALLEY/Democrat)

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