

District 5 candidates outline views on a variety of issues

By Nick Baptista

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Economic development, the Calaveras County budget, the General Plan update and proposed increase of the Transient Occupancy Tax were topics touched on during Thursday evening's candidates' debate hosted by the Calaveras County Chamber of Commerce and Calaveras County Association of Realtors.

District 5 challenger Ben Stopper said he would like to see more parks and better roads to help spark economic development and that could be done through developer agreements to provide those amenities.

Doing so would also increase home values, he added.

District 5 Supervisor Clyde Clapp said the county has hired an economic development director to assist in expanding business in the county. In addition he was pleased the Mark Twain Health Care District was building a new clinic in Valley Springs, "a big plus for the area" and he is working to start a new underground utility district through fees already paid in utility bills.

Stopper also voiced his alarm at the lack of affordable housing in District 5 and the need to attract new businesses to the area and diversify the economy.

When questioned about what they would bring to the Board of Supervisors, Stopper said he would add more transparency to government, especially when it comes to building permit fees and said the present system "chases new business out of the county."

Clapp said one of his major achievements since joining the board was giving the community fire district a quarter of the TOT monies and he is working to pass the November vote to double the tax so the fire districts, Sheriff's Office, roads department and Visitors Bureau will receive more money from the room tax.

Stopper agreed the TOT tax needs to be increased, but the public needs to see where the funding is going.

When it came to the budget, the two District 5 candidates had opposite views.

Clapp said the county has to have a balanced budget and this year was not an exception. Calls that the county was running a deficit were “not true.”

“We will be in good shape next year,” he added.

Stopper said revenues were down and costs were up, especially since the board banned commercial cannabis cultivation.

Creating new revenue through fee and excise tax increases will not be enough to sustain county government, he added.

He called for approval of the General Plan update to facilitate new development especially in the areas of commercial and industrial growth and overall a more diversified economy.

Clapp said he was grateful to see the long overdue General Plan update out to the public for review. The update has been in the works for more than a decade.

Stopper, who worked on the General Plan update while a planning commissioner, said the General Plan process “needs transparency, community involvement and compromise as it moves forward.

He said he would “work diligently to find that compromise” and would like to see all community plans incorporated into the final document.