

# Candidates address voters at Grand Island forum

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Voters on Grand Island got a chance to “Meet the Candidates” running in next month’s general election at an informational forum held Thursday night.

In attendance were the four candidates running for two seats on the Town Board: incumbents Gary Roesch and Richard Crawford and Democratic challengers Norman Moorhouse and James Sharpe.

Town Supervisor Peter McMahon, a Democrat, is running for reelection, challenged by Councilwoman Mary Cooke.

Cooke, who is endorsed by the Republican, Conservative and Independence parties, vowed to bring “new energy and a clearer focus on the issues” to the position and took issue with McMahon being away from Town Hall for 46 days during his last term.

McMahon said that under his watch, Grand Island has been in “the best financial condition it has been in its long history” and “has an excellent bond rating on Wall Street.” He noted that all but 16 days he was away from Town Hall in 2010 were spent conducting town business and seeking ways to improve operations on the Island.

Moorhouse said he was not adequately versed on most issues to answer voter questions in detail, but vowed repeatedly to vote “no” on any budget that raised taxes.

“The bottom line with me is taxes. Taxes keep going up and no one seems to mind or want to make cuts,” said Moorhouse, who made an unsuccessful bid for the same seat in 2009.

Roesch is pushing for zoning and comprehensive master plan updates and said he will control spending to provide a stable tax base.

“It’s about enhancing the quality of life on Grand Island and economic development is part of that,” Roesch said.

Sharpe vowed to cut the cost of government by reducing salaries, eliminating board health insurance bonuses and consolidating departments. Like all of the candidates, he acknowledged that the town’s upcoming housing re-evaluation will be a challenge.

“The reassessment is a long time coming; 1985 was the last time it was done,” said Sharpe. “If it had been done right all these years, the swing in value wouldn’t be so [dramatic].”

Crawford promised to be a “tough fiscal manager,” and said there is “no fat” in the town’s budget. He called the housing assessments “an issue that’s close to everyone’s heart.”