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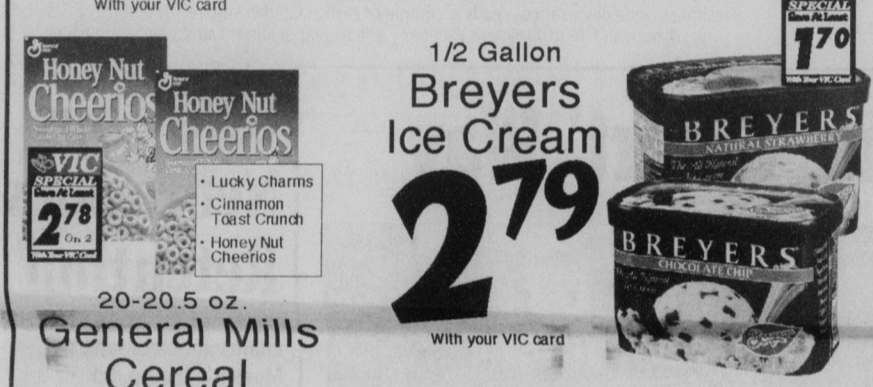
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Orange County Candidates Square Off on Local Issues

Budget concerns dominated the discussion at a forum for county school board and commissioner candidates.

By ROBERT ALBRIGHT
Staff Writer

Only four of the eight candidates for the Orange County Board of Education came to a pre-election forum Tuesday night, even though the meeting was available for all candidates to promote their platforms.

Organized by the Community Action Network, the forum allowed school board and county commissioner candidates to speak their minds on a myriad of topics.

Despite the disappointing turnout among school board candidates, forum moderator Fred Black said the televised meeting gave candidates a unique opportunity to reveal their platforms.

"This forum covers a full spectrum of topics," he said. "(CAN) tried to create a range of items that are of interest to a wide range of people."

With a free-flowing question and answer format, the forum for school board candidates covered budget con-



Candidates for Orange County Board of Education and Orange County Board of Commissioners positions participate in an election forum.

cerns, long-range planning, class size and student and teacher performance.

Battling for three available spots on the board, the four candidates who did show up at the forum stressed the importance of serving the students first.

Incumbent Delores Simpson, who has served on the board for eight years, said she would continue working for the best interests of Orange County students if re-elected.

"I'm dedicated to bringing the schools up to the standards that it royally deserves," she said.

Candidate Dana Thompson recognized the efforts of the board. However, Thompson said she would offer more.

"We need to ensure that no student falls through the cracks," she said. "We should be using our hearts and minds."

Although the school board candidates often echoed each other's sentiments, incumbent Keith Cook said he was a logical choice for re-election.

"I am a person who will meet new challenges to make sure our schools stay on the cutting edge," he said.

David Hunt, who joined Cook, Simpson and Thompson at the forum, said there was a broad range of issues to tackle with the school board.

"There's a lot to be proud of in Orange County," he said. "I can bring problem prevention tools to the board."

The four school board candidates

who did not attend the forum were Gary Horne, Richard Hathaway, Marcia Blum Compton and Lee Fowler.

After the school board candidates offered their closing statements, Black moved on to the second portion of the forum featuring all five Orange County Commissioner candidates.

Although Democratic incumbents Moses Carey and Margaret Brown are assured of their spots on the ballot, they both chose to speak at the forum.

Each party will have two representatives in the November elections.

Carey and Brown both said the county commissioner's efforts to balance the budget had been effective.

Judy Anderson, John Felton and David Herman, the three candidates battling for the two Republican spots, also said fiscal policy was of utmost importance.

"The commissioners have to play an active part in school funding," Anderson said. "Growth is coming to this county."

In addition to school funding, growth in the region also served as a much discussed topic. Felton said he wanted to balance the budget and further growth, while Herman said he wanted to make Orange County an even better climate for developers.

The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.

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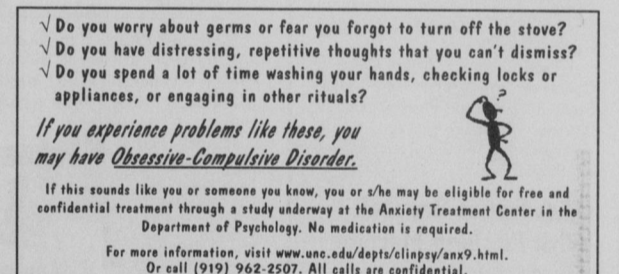


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