

Gangs, business priorities for campaign

Newport News mayoral candidates speak

Updated: Thursday, 22 Apr 2010, 7:26 PM EDT
Published : Thursday, 22 Apr 2010, 5:49 PM EDT

NEWPORT NEWS, Va (WAVY) - Newport News councilwoman and former school board member Pat Woodbury, and dentist and former school board chairman McKinley Price are vying to become the city's next mayor. They are in a race to replace retiring Mayor Joe Frank who has held the position for 14 years.

Both candidates say they will use their business backgrounds to bring Newport News through difficult financial times. The city is negotiating a budget that's \$10 million less than last year.

"I think we've got to really look at a business advisory for our small businesses who need to grow in these economic times," Woodbury said.

"Good business grows business," said Price. "We get the larger businesses here, the other businesses will grow to support those."

The candidates both pledge to tackle youth violence in the city.

Price explained he would be unveiling a plan Thursday evening to address gangs. "We have 64 gangs in this city, 2000 students. That's like a full high school. We've got to be able to find things for our kids to do other than make that detrimental choice," he told WAVY.com

According to Woodbury, "The biggest thing is to address our gang problem, so it's a safe city."

"This is a safety issue and a jobs issue," said Price on Newport News' transportation. "If we have a catastrophe, it's going to be very difficult for people to evacuate. It's going to be tough to get businesses here if people are sitting in a parking lot for two hours trying to get from one place to the other... I'm anxious to get involved with the other mayors if I'm elected so we can come up with a regional plan."

McKinley once served as a member of the Hampton Roads Public Transportation Coalition.

Woodbury, who is a member of the Hampton Roads Transit Authority, said she believes as mayor she will be able to move mass transit forward. "It's about fighting for us on this side and having more representation on the HRT board... I think we're back on track on light rail. I'm glad we've got it there. I'm glad Virginia Beach is getting it. But we need ours too."

While the position of mayor is a non-partisan position, Price and Woodbury have received endorsements from members of the Democratic and Republican parties respectively.

Congressman Bobby Scott, D-3rd District, and Mayor Joe Frank endorsed Price. Congressman Rob Wittman, R-1st District, and Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli.