

Douglass

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Douglass said he supports Mayor Walt Craig's idea of developing a mayor's advisory board to get citizens more involved in the community.

Douglass challenged Craig and won the party nomination for mayor. He said he did so because he thought Craig wouldn't pull the votes necessary to win the election.

Douglass said he feels there are a lot of people who are interested in doing things in the township, and he sees the advisory board as putting people to work together for the interest of everybody.

"It's a win-win for everybody," he said.

Douglass said it's difficult to balance needs and wants with projects like the outflow

pipe repair project. He said it requires working with all the people and coming up with a solution everyone can be comfortable with. He said everyone knows what needs to be done, but the township is budget-crunching now and he is sensitive to the burden the project could put on the township taxpayers.

Douglass said he has always voted for what he thought was right, and there are areas that need to continue to be worked on.

"Each year the budget is tighter, base costs are going up, insurance is going up, salaries...we have to look at contract negotiations for the future, and the employees are going to have to work with

us," he said. "We need to ask them to give us ideas."

Douglass favors working more on shared services and supports the idea of sharing police services with West Cape May and Cape May Point. He said trash and recycling services could be shared with other communities.

"We need to look at how we can have better programs to better the township. We need to work hard for more grants. We need to look at all avenues," he said.

Douglass said township government needs to work with the Lower Township Municipal Utilities Authority on mandatory hookups and see how it can be accom-

plished at minimal cost.

He said the municipal budget has a lot of set costs, such as fuel and utilities, and a lot of areas are already over budget. He said budgets are not getting easier for any towns. He said council needs to look at salaries in future contracts, but there is no instant relief on the budget. He said the township has to pay more in benefits, and everyone will have to look hard at contracts. Douglass said early retirement could help, but he wants quality employees to stay.

Douglass said one of the biggest points he wants to make in his campaign is that it's important to listen to the people and to get them back

in charge of the township - be more a part of what goes on in council meetings.

"I feel because I'm a rooted person I can get these people involved. I have a lot of family and friends living and working in this town," he said.

Douglass said there has to be trust between the people and their elected body, and he wants to build that kind of rapport with the community.

Douglass said it's tough being a three-way race for mayor, and there are reasons to support all three candidates.

"We are there to do the best we can, to work for them (residents)," Douglass said.

He said there needs to be

teamwork among council members and teamwork with township employees, saying you can sometimes get better ideas about how to do things from those who do the work.

Douglass said Beck was on council for eight years and they are still working on some things left from when he was in office. Roach, he said was not on council as long. He said whoever is elected, they are only one vote on council and they have to cooperate with the other council members to make a better community.

"It's not whose party it is. We need to make things better for the citizens of Lower Township," he said.

Beck

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not finished.

Beck said he had to fight council when they tried to get rid of township manager Kathy McPherson, to push for landlord accountability, to eliminate pay to play practices, and to hold the line on spending.

"These guys don't know how to say no," Beck said.

Beck said the biggest issue in Lower Township is controlling spending, which he proposes to do through regionalization, without layoffs or

jeopardizing the health and safety of township residents.

At the same time, Beck points out that in 1998, employee salaries and wages were 50.3-percent of the township budget. In 2007 that number rose to 57.5-percent. He said during that time healthcare costs doubled.

"I think our employees are fantastic people," Beck said. "At the same time, so are the people who are paying the bills."

Beck, running as an inde-

pendent candidate with Kevin Lare, said it is their goal to establish in Lower Township the most open municipal government in New Jersey. He said he would use all available technology to post information online, tape and air council meetings, and institute a mayor's advisory board to focus on economic issues.

"We propose that council neither raise nor lower their compensation without the recommendation of an independent citizens committee," he said.

He said he would put all information online, beginning with the bills, posting them before the township meeting. He said all agendas, minutes, and expenditures would be available online.

"Our policy will be to keep private only that which we cannot legally release or which would jeopardize the public health, safety and wel-

fare," he said.

Beck said he would "end the circus with the MUA," and promise to give them the tools to do the job, but then hold them accountable for getting the job done. He said mandatory hook-ups are in the foreseeable future, because otherwise some people are going to be drinking water they shouldn't. But he said it has to be done in accordance with council directives.

"I had a plan for this and council dropped ball. It's been the equivalent of a dog chasing its tail. There has been a total lack of leadership, and there hasn't been a single water line laid since I left office. During my time, half my area received water," he said.

Beck said there has been a call for increasing the size of the police department saying crime is on the rise. Beck said the statistics don't bear that

out, with the Uniform Crime Report showing a decrease in crime from the year 2000, with the exception of 2004. Beck said the number of officers increased from 40 in 1992 to 46 in 2008, while the population has decreased about 11-percent. Beck said hiring more officers would eventually bankrupt the township.

Of the 46 officers, 31 earn over \$80,000 per year. Of the 31, 16 earn between \$80,000 and \$90,000, nine earn \$90,000 to \$100,000 and six earn over \$100,000. Beck said 13 of 15 officers earning less than \$100,000 have not yet been brought up to full pay.

Beck said there are other steps to take before hiring more officers, such as developing a more robust and proactive town watch, partnering with the commercial and residential communities and involving one member of

council; increasing landlord accountability, holding landlords responsible for renting to people who damage the quality of life in their community; and hiring more Class II officers for summer use, if necessary.

"When we have lost one in nine residents, you have to look at what we are doing, how it will impact businesses, the tax revenue," Beck said. "You can't do anything about existing salaries, but it is an argument for regionalization."

Beck said he spoke out against big wage contracts and more hiring, and "got beat up a little for it," but he said when there are people in the township living on fixed incomes, you've got to control cost of government.

"The way to control things you can't control is bring them to light," he said.

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Roach

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next thing you know they're talking about abolishing it," Roach said.

Roach also mentioned the Bennett's Crossing Sports Complex, which he said was "\$1.5 million over budget and not finished." And he said he did not like the way the governing body went about the

transfer of former manager Kathy McPherson and the "heavy-handed" attempt to abolish the grants coordinator position.

"There is just a lack of leadership and direction," Roach said.

Roach said council members are not professionals, so

one of the biggest decisions they make is in the hiring of the township manager. He said when engaged in projects like the outflow pipe repairs, the engineers take care of the design and permits, but ultimately the manager is responsible for how the project is handled, and so are the members of council.

Roach said capital expenditures have increased tremendously and debt service has gone up with each budget. He said he is concerned about providing the type of services residents need while being fair to township employees.

He said the township has a responsibility to provide relief to people in flood prone areas, but he said the township should look at other alternatives than old technology, which carries pollutants into the bay.

Roach said the township

government cannot simply act in a reactive mode as it has in the past.

"They solve problems after they come to a head," he said.

Roach said the township had to react to the problem of employees using township equipment for personal business because the city didn't have a strong, clear policy. He said the township manager should be meeting regularly with departments heads and they should review policies, rules and regulations.

"If a stronger policy had been in place we wouldn't have seen the confusion, and some say abuse, of township equipment," he said.

As far as municipal spending, Roach said the amount of money required for down payments on capital projects has gone up, as has debt service.

Roach said he would work to save tax money by greater cooperation with the LTMUA. He said the MUA can do things to create income, which will reduce costs.

He said he would look at other ways to reduce the day-to-day cost of government, such as reducing the amount of vehicles or using other kinds of vehicles.

"Not one measure too small to be considered," he said.

Roach said every municipality was hurting when they were forced to resume payments into the personnel pension system, after Gov. Whitman had excused them from making contributions into the pension fund. He said as a councilman, he worked to create inter-local service agreements, which he described as the "forerunner of regionalization," as a way of cutting costs. He said the township should look at any way to consolidate services. However, Roach said he believed people would see countywide consolidation of school services before consolidation of police services at the county level, which he said would not work. He is in favor of Lower Township pursuing an inter-local agreement for police services with West Cape May and Cape May Point.

Roach said it's a popular thing for a candidate to say he will hold the line on spending, but the township needs leaders to stand up and say how much something would cost, and explain the need in a clear and concise manner.

He said people are concerned about the cost of government, but they are also concerned about the loss of open space and the cost of doing business in Lower Township.

"Not everything is tied to taxes, but people want us to control the percentage of growth. Some people want lower taxes and more services. Realistically, you can't have both," Roach said.

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