



Press Release

Chamber to Host Moderated Candidate Forums

Parish and Sheriff Office Candidates Invited to Address Public

Natchitoches, LA, August 28, 2019: The Natchitoches Area Chamber of Commerce will host two public, moderated candidate forums for the upcoming election. On Wednesday, September 25, the Chamber will host a Sheriff's candidate forum. On Thursday, September 26, the Chamber will host a Parish Office candidate forum, with the candidates running for Parish Council and Parish President. Both forums will take place at Northwestern State University's Creative and Performing Arts Annex, in Magale Recital Hall, 143 Central Avenue, from 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM. The forums will be facilitated and hosted by the Chamber and sponsored by NSU's Student Government Association.

Every candidate running for either Parish Sheriff, President, or Council received a letter inviting them to attend their respective forum. With their letter, they also received a questionnaire, and a request to submit their answers back to the Chamber by noon on September 5th. Each candidate's response will be posted and available to view at natchitocheschamber.com/candidatesrespond on September 6th. The responses will also be sent out to local media. See below for the questions that were sent to each candidate.

These forums will be free and open to the public. Both forums will follow the same format as the School Board Candidate forum that was previously hosted by the A+ Coalition, an initiative of the Chamber. Each candidate for Parish President and Parish Council will be given the opportunity to speak for three minutes on questions 5 and 6, and each candidate for Parish Sheriff will be given the opportunity to speak for three minutes on questions 3 and 4. The audience will be given the chance to submit written questions to the candidates at the beginning of the event. Questions will be presented by the moderator, and to keep the forum fair, each candidate will have an allotted amount of time to respond to the questions posed. There will be a timer with a signal card to keep each candidate on track. For Parish Council, questions will be required to be addressed to the district, and not an individual candidate.

The Chamber is hosting these forums with the intent of promoting civic engagement and civic literacy. The Natchitoches Area Chamber of Commerce helps foster a thriving community through transformative leadership, collaboration, and innovation.

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For Release Immediately

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Parish President / Council Candidate Questionnaire

1. **Budget:** Do you believe the current budget is sufficient? If not, what do you think is the most effective way to address it?
2. **Experience:** What experience do you have with complicated budgets and management?
3. **Changes and Reform:** In your view, what has the parish done well over last five years? What has the parish done poorly that you would change? Please provide specific examples.
4. **Representation:** *[For Parish Council Candidates only.]* You represent a specific part of Natchitoches Parish—how will you balance the needs of your specific constituents with the needs of the overall parish?
5. **Economic Development:** What role do you think you'll play in economic development? Specifically, what in your opinion are the most significant hindrances you think prevent businesses from locating in Natchitoches Parish, and how do you plan to address them?
6. **Millages:** Do you see an opportunity to more effectively allocate the existing millages and sales tax allocations in the Parish while maintaining the overall rate? Please provide specific examples.
7. **Capital Outlay:** What specific projects do you see as critical components of our capital outlay plan? What projects do you see having the highest return on investment?
8. **Tourism:** Tourism in Natchitoches is an important factor of economic development. What do you think we're doing well in promoting our parish externally, and what other opportunities do you see in bringing outside visitors (and their pocketbooks)?

Sheriff Candidate Questionnaire

1. **Budget & Finance:** With NPSO's budget around \$17 million, what experience do you have with complicated budgets and management?
2. **Illegal Drugs & Opioid Epidemic:** Illegal drugs and the opioid crisis are a huge concern to businesses in our parish as it affects our workforce, crime rates, quality of life and economic development. If elected Sheriff, how would you combat these problems effectively?
3. **Experience:** What professional experience and training do you have that would make you the best candidate to effectively manage the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Office?
4. **Changes and Reform:** What changes would you make in the Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Office if you are elected Sheriff?
5. **Education and Programming:** In what ways does NPSO positively impact our youngest citizens in K-12 education, and in what ways would you improve on existing programming?
6. **Cyber Security:** With cyber-attacks becoming more prevalent across the state, what would you do as Sheriff to combat these attacks in our parish?