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PHOTO BY LISA LIRONES

HELENA TOWNSHIP

“Meet the Candidates” they did!

Record turnout for July 14th forum

By Samantha Tengelitsch, Correspondent

The auditorium at the Helena Township Hall in Alden saw a tremendous turnout for the 105th District Bi-Partisan “Meet the Candidates Forum” held July 14th and co-sponsored by the *Elk Rapids News* along with WMKT. It is estimated close to 100 area residents crowded into the hall to listen and ask questions of the candidates.

Contending for the US Congressional 1st District Seat currently occupied by Congressman Bart Stupak-D: Jason Allen-R, Pat Donlon-R, Don Hooper-R, and Tom Stillings-R were present for the forum. Not in attendance at the forum: Dan Benishek-R and Gary McDowell-D.

At the forum, Senator Jason Allen expressed concern over the national health care bill and said he was “outraged” over the direction the country is headed. Allen said it will be his primary objective as Congressman to “stop national healthcare, stop the funding of national healthcare through every possible roadblock.”

Asked about political integrity, Candidate Tom Stillings said, “If you catch me saying one thing and doing another, you have a job to do: Make sure I don’t get reelected. And I will do my best to make sure that never happens. If we fail to keep our word, you’ve got to throw us out like the trash.”

Pat Donlon said, “You can do the best job by setting an example.” If elected, Donlon promised to “represent all of the constituents” to the best of his ability with “honesty, integrity and humility.”

While Republican Candidate Don Hooper labeled President Obama and his administration “socialists,” he assured he would never make any attempt to take Medicare or social security away from any individual. “We can change it as time goes on, but right now every person who has put money into social security deserves social security.”

State Senate 37th District previously held by Republican Senator Jason Allen (now running for the 1st District Congressional Seat held by Bart Stupak-D): Randy Bishop-R, Bob Carr-D, (not in attendance at the forum: Howard Walker-R)

Randy Bishop said at the forum, “I am not a politician; I am a citizen candidate.”

The former business owner lost half of his net worth in the stock market and returned to northern Michigan to be closer to family. It was then Bishop bought a semi-truck and began long hauling. Said Bishop, “All across this country, state to



Greg MacMaster addresses questions from the audience at the July 14th “Meet the Candidates” Forum held at the Helena Township Hall in Alden. Photos by Samantha Tengelitsch

Meet the Candidates continued to page 2



Minuteman Don Hooper, running for the 1st District Congressional seat currently held by Democrat Bart Stupak, addresses the forum.



Conservative Pat Donlon, running for the 1st District Congressional seat, and a forum audience attendee talk about the upcoming primary.



Greg Dean, the “conservative democrat” is the only democrat running for the 105th house seat.



Triston Cole discusses the concerns of a constituent during a break at the forum.

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Tim Boyko, a Republican candidate for the 105th House Seat, responding to questions posed during the forum. Photos by Samantha Tengelitsch

state, I saw things that worked and I saw things that didn't work."

Known popularly as "Trucker Randy," Bishop said in states with fewer regulations and lower taxes, he saw help wanted signs and new construction. In states with higher taxes and greater regulation, he saw foreclosure signs. He believes a repeal of the state personal income tax in favor of a fair tax will boost Michigan's struggling economy.

Democratic Candidate, Bob Carr introduced his wife, Karen, and said the pair are running for the seat together and will work together. Carr also said he hoped to "inspire," rather than scare people into action.

The six remaining Republican candidates running for the 105th House District seat occupied by Rep. Kevin Elsenheimer are as follows: Tim Boyko (Charlevoix), Triston Cole (Antrim), Greg MacMaster (Antrim), Kenneth Glasser (Gaylord), Dennis Lennox (Cheboygan), and not present at the forum, Barry Anderson (Charlevoix), will face Greg Dean (Charlevoix), the conservative democrat, on August 3rd.

Tim Boyko, a Republican running for State Representative, said he's concerned for the next generation. "People are moving away from Michigan. My hope is that I can go to Lansing and create a business-friendly environment in this state that they will come back here, raise their children, work, play and retire and invigorate this state."

Triston Cole introduced himself as a conservative republican and said, "I am a regular working man; I have a small farm." Regarding money for schools, Cole said, "It comes down to being responsible with tax-payer dollars and being honest and upfront and transparent. As far as education, the Michigan Fair Tax would work toward guaranteeing revenue sharing with local schools." Cole also supports equal funding for all schools regardless of the district.

Running as a conservative democrat, Greg Dean said, "I am a strong proponent of education." Owner of a stone-mill located in Charlevoix County, Dean said it is difficult to find qualified

Meet the Candidates continued to page 7

Meet the Candidates continued from page 2

employees. "I would push to eliminate programs that are marginal. I think need to audit every program the government has for its viability and move the money to where it's needed; to where it's going to help the citizens of our state."



Audience member and Whitewater Twp. resident Cheryl Walton poses a question to the candidate.
Photo by Samantha Tengelitsch

Ken Glasser, a small business owner who has worked at the county level and in the private sector, said "We're all concerned with the direction in which this country is headed. The real problem is out of control bureaucracy in Lansing." Glasser added, "The extraordinary tax burden on businesses has driven businesses and jobs out of Michigan. We've got to fix that." Glasser supports the Michigan Fair Tax and proposes the fair tax will lift the tax burden on Michigan businesses.

Dennis Lennox said his greatest concern is the exodus

of people away from Michigan, "I'm running for your next representative because I've waved good-bye to my generation. We've lost one family every 12 minutes."

Lennox said he has watched many of his friends leave to work in larger cities outside of Michigan. He also cited the impact on Michigan schools, "Twenty-five K-12 students who started the school-year in Northern Michigan in September, left before the finish." Lennox said it is necessary to create an environment in Michigan where businesses can succeed. "We need to get the focus on Lansing in keeping our children and grandchildren here."

Greg MacMaster, Republican contender for the 105th house seat, said his biggest priority was holding government accountable and returning common sense to governance. A pilot and former meteorologist, MacMaster would like to see more funding for education and roads.

When asked specifically about eliminating partisan elections, MacMaster responded, "I would love to see them go away completely with the party-designation and we run on a platform of common sense; what we truly believe."

Special thanks to our contributor Priscilla Miller for organizing the forum and to Greg Marshall for moderating the event. Appreciation also to Helena Township for the use of the hall.