

Kalamazoo City Commission Forum Keeps Students Involved in Community

October 28, 2009

As the Kalamazoo City Commission approaches on November 3, many students are left wondering who to vote for, what to vote for, for and what is even on the ballot. The WSA and the WMU Institute of Government and Politics held the Kalamazoo City Commission Candidate Forum on October 27, 2009 in hopes to remedy these issues for students, as well as community members.

The Fetzer Center Auditorium was filled with almost 100 people, the majority of them students and young people, facing the candidates at the front of the hall. Fourteen of the 17 candidates running for City Commission were present for the event.

Gordan Evans of WMUK moderated the event and explained the parameters of the forum. Each candidate had one minute to answer the question until the final round, when they had 90 seconds to present any last minute remarks.

Candidates answered questions from the audience, political science classes, as well as over ten questions developed by WSA members. Questions ranged from the Equal Rights Ordinance and Metro Transit millage to tourism and a downtown event center.

A prevalent topic of the evening was how to retain students in Kalamazoo after they have finished their education at WMU. "We need jobs for students after they graduate," Candidate Mike Kilbourne stated. "Then they can raise a family here and send their students to WMU."

Sophomore student and WSA Senator Lauren Hearit is a registered voter in Portage, but she attended the event because she understands that important decisions made in Kalamazoo have great effect on WMU. "It's important or students to attend events like this because they are residents here for at least four years and they need to find places where their voices can be heard."

All candidates want students to feel like residents of Kalamazoo, not just "semester tourists."

Voting for the Kalamazoo City Commission as well as the Non-Discrimination and Metro Transit Millage will be held on November 3, 2009 at your local polling place.