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At forum, Detroit mayoral candidates discuss safety

BY BEN SCHMITT • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • DECEMBER 11, 2008

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A group of Detroit mayoral candidates gathered Thursday for a three-hour forum to tackle issues ranging from public safety to economic development.

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Attending the forum were Detroit Mayor Ken Cockrel Jr., businessman and former Detroit Piston Dave Bing, former Deputy Mayor Freman Hendrix, former City Councilman Nicholas Hood III, Joseph Warren Holt, Duane Montgomery, Jerroll Sanders, D. Etta Wilcoxon, Stanley Christmas and Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans.

Former City Councilwoman Sharon McPhail, who was ex-Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's general counsel, was traveling Thursday and did not attend. State Rep. Coleman A. Young II could not attend because the legislature was in session Thursday.

Kilpatrick is in jail after pleading guilty in September to two felonies in connection with the text message scandal. He also pleaded no contest to an assault charge and resigned from office.

There are a total of 15 candidates running for a chance to serve out the remaining 10 months of Kilpatrick's term. A special primary is scheduled for Feb. 24 to select the top two candidates. A May 5 general election will determine the winner.

Charles Pugh of WJBK-TV (Fox 2 Detroit) moderated the event, which was hosted by the University of Detroit Mercy and sponsored by Wayne County Commissioner Keith Williams, University Commons, the Oakland Boulevard Community Association, 12th Precinct Neighborhood Association and 6th District Advisory Board.

"We have a very important decision coming up soon," Pugh said. "Hopefully you will hear something tonight that you hadn't heard before."

More than 200 people packed the Fountain Lounge. Among those in the crowd were former Detroit Deputy Police Chief Gary Brown and Detroit Police Officer and local blogger John Bennett, who are both running for Detroit City Council.

The audience was given questionnaire cards with six subjects: education, economic development, safety/crime, health care, transportation and other.



ROB WIDDIS/Special to the Free Press

Current Mayor Ken Cockrel Jr., center, says he offers a chance to stabilize Detroit's government: "I think it's important that we have some continuity," he said. Dave Bing, left, countered: "I think I am qualified from a business perspective." With them are D. Etta Wilcoxon and Warren Evans.



ROB WIDDIS/Special to the Free Press

Ten of the 15 candidates for Detroit mayor prepare to share stances on issues facing the city Thursday at the University of Detroit Mercy. Audience members received cards they could use to ask about education, economic development, safety and crime, health care and transportation.

PHOTO GALLERIES

[Detroit Mayoral Candidate Forum](#)

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Cockrel, who was City Council president and automatically assumed the role of mayor after Kilpatrick's sentencing, preached stability when asked about why voters should keep him as mayor.

"I think it's important that we have some continuity in the city of Detroit," he said. "I don't think there would be a whole lot of value to change again from a continuity standpoint."

Bing, who owns an automotive supply company in Detroit's North End area, said he is a job creator and knows how to run a business.

"I know what it's like to make the final decisions," he said. "I think I am qualified from a business perspective to do what is necessary to run the city."

During a Dec. 2 debate, Cockrel and Hendrix criticized Bing, who spent the last decade living in Franklin until he filed to run for mayor, as being out of touch with Detroiters.

"We are raising five children in the city of Detroit," Cockrel said at the time. "I've dealt with the issues. I've had my house broken into. I've had the gutter stolen off my garage. ...I do think the next mayor of Detroit needs to be someone who's dealt with those issues firsthand."

Bing responded that he raised his children in Detroit and has employed hundreds of city residents at his company.

"I've been in this city for 42 years, so I really don't think I'm a carpetbagger at all," he said.

Bing also previously referred to several candidates as "retreads."

Contact **BEN SCHMITT** at 313-223-4296 or bschmitt@freepress.com.

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[restoretheroar22](#) wrote:

The only decent candidate out of these group of idiots is Dave Bing. Cockrel is a loser and makes me sick just looking at him. Bing is a classy guy. Cockrel is the biggest moron ever. Look at what he said "I've dealt with the issues. I've had my house broken into. I've had the gutter stolen off my garage. ...I do think the next mayor of Detroit needs to be someone who's dealt with those issues firsthand." Bragging about getting your house broken into should qualify you to be a mayor??? I mean seriously how ghetto are these idiots running for Detroit. Can we get someone with any intelligence to run this city. I like Bing cause he seems like a guy that actually cares and isn't just another person who is hood and talks about black this or black that.

12/12/2008 2:36:30 a.m. EDT

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[dRevolution](#) wrote:

Charles Pugh moderating a political fourm? Really?

12/12/2008 2:36:19 a.m. EDT

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[JoshuaNewman](#) wrote:

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Perhaps the greatest tragedy for Detroit was the death of Kenny Cockrell Sr, who understood the city, was bright, honest, and flexibe when necessary, tough when he needed to be, and who grasped how things change. Today, the talent pool in Detroit is pathetic. Freeman Hendrix: the thug who ran the state Takeover Board, stripping people of voting rights. Ken C Jr cannot carry his father's hat. Sharon MCFail is nuts. Dave Bing is not a mayor in waiting, but a dribble. Part of this crisis of leadership belongs in the lap of the collapsed school system which, for decades helped Talibanize the city. Riddled with ignorance and corruption---and nepotism---at every level, the school system made things worse. Blame for that sits in the lap of the bosses of the DFT who did nothing as the education system disintegrated. They even failed to protect member jobs, let alone the education of youth. I sincerely hope Detroit does not implode as the violence against the city would be awful, and racist.

12/12/2008 1:28:34 a.m. EDT

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Queen7 wrote:

Why wasn' this made more public or announced by the tv station? Was it even taped? What service did this provide to the full citizenship of the city? or were they just preaching to the choir?

12/12/2008 12:49:49 a.m. EDT

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BurmaNotMyanmar wrote:

Was this thing televised? What a horrible group of people running these debates! Very unprofessional and ignorant. No advertising....no updates. High school quality!

12/12/2008 12:33:00 a.m. EDT

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