

District 1 council seat up for grabs

Written by Marty Carlson

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City council spot between incumbent Irwin and businessman Beam

The Bossier City Council and Mayor election set for April 6 will be a quiet affair as only two Council district seats are contested – and Mayor Lo Walker has no opposition.

In Council District 1, incumbent Scott Irwin is challenged by Mike Beam; Council District 5 short-term incumbent Larry Hanisee has two challengers – Tommy Harvey, who lost the last race for the seat by only two votes – and political newcomer Mischa Angel.

Today's focus is Council District 1 where Republican Mike Beam says he has no quarrel with Scott Irwin's representation of the district – but Beam believes his public service work could continue through a Council seat.

Beam is a retired Bossier City police officer. After 24 years with the Bossier City Police Department (BCPD), Beam took the helm of his family's restaurant in south Bossier.

He said he believes his work in policing will prove beneficial to helping people in the district.

And he said, "Public safety is one of my concerns. The number of (Bossier City) police officers is down – they just have over 190 police personnel – that's a pretty low amount when you look at all the divisions."

Beam said he still stays in touch with BCPD officers, and is concerned that the city no longer offers them an education incentive. He also expressed concern about the lack of raises for police officers over the last couple of years.

Another area of concern for Beam is traffic. "Hopefully when the ART Parkway extension opens next week, it will help the Highway 511 congestion," Beam said, noting that

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“511 is the biggest traffic concern in south Bossier.”

Beam also commented on the Jimmy Davis Bridge, saying, “Everyone’s always wanted another bridge, but you’d just get to another bottleneck quicker.”

Beam said that he believes it’s important to be available where people can contact him when problems arise – and he pledged to make that contact personal by “seeing problems with his own eyes” and letting people know if their problems can be taken care of. He said that if he does not know the answer to a problem, he will research and try to find the answers.

“I can’t bring world peace and I’m not going to make any promises – but I’d like the opportunity to help make Bossier better,” Beam said.

Ten year incumbent District 1 Council member Scott Irwin, also a Republican, said he hopes south Bossier residents will see the merit in what he’s accomplished over the years and send him back to the Council for another term.

“We’ve accomplished a lot for south Bossier,” Irwin said, “but there’s a whole lot left to do.”

Accomplishments include two “big” improvements, Irwin said, and the first of those is the ART Parkway’s southern extension. “For the first time in Bossier’s history, we have two ways through south Bossier,” Irwin said – noting Barksdale Boulevard and the Parkway – “that will revolutionize traffic in south Bossier and we’ll have the best traffic system in Bossier City.”

Irwin pointed to major improvements in south Bossier’s traffic system beyond the Parkway, and which include widening Highway 511 to five lanes and the addition of ramps to the Jimmy Davis Bridge. The ramps, said Irwin, “improve traffic flow as much as can be improved short of a new bridge span.” But that’s also an Irwin goal – and one he hopes to continue working toward.

The second major accomplishment is the new parish-city 100-acre South Bossier Park.

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While the Bossier Parish Police Jury was able to secure the property for the park, the city is supplying a significant part of the early funding in the form of \$1 million that Irwin was able to have set aside for a park from the city's 2008 transportation bond fund.

"We could have done smaller parks in the city, but we really wanted a larger park where multiple teams could play," Irwin said. He described phase one of the park to include construction of walking trails, playground areas, restrooms, and fishing areas around well-developed ball and soccer fields.

Irwin also noted that Mike Woods Park in Shady Grove has been refurbished during his council tenure and that he was instrumental in getting the ball rolling on state funding for the just approved lighting project on Barksdale Boulevard from Barksdale's main gate to Highway 511.

Irwin said he'd received a call from then state Rep. Jane Smith advising funds were available – and Irwin contacted city Projects Director Pam Glorioso – who put together the grant proposal that eventually led to the project's award.

Irwin counts his "very good working relationships" with parish and state folks essential to moving south Bossier and the city as a whole forward. "By working together, we're getting things done," and he pointed to the Highway 511 widening as an example of that cooperative work.

Irwin's professional field is finance and he's comfortable with city budget issues. "We have been able to run a very efficient city, providing outstanding services, with a world class fire and police department in part on a property tax millage set at a 30-year low. The only way to do that is to watch and manage the budget," he said, crediting a cohesive council with this critical work.

Finally, Irwin talked about a few of his goals for another four year term. Those include working with the state Department of Transportation and Development on a "J-turn" at

Southgate on Highway 71 South – which would go far in relieving the current major congestion

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in that area. He also hopes to tackle the complicated task of rebuilding surface areas at railroad crossings.

“I’ve been successfully working with council for ten years,” said Irwin, “I’ve gotten a lot done, and I look forward to the opportunity to continue improving south Bossier.”

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