

Forum poll finds Yukimura, Bynum leading

Nathan Eagle

THE GARDEN ISLAND

Roughly 200 residents Tuesday evening packed the War Memorial Convention Hall to hear what the broad field of candidates for mayor and Kauai County Council had to say on some of the most critical issues facing the island.

The Eco-Roundtable, a network of more than 50 sustainability-oriented organizations, hosted the event, emceed by Andrea Brower and Keone Kealoha of Malama Kauai.

Questions varied in topic and format from simple "yes or no" support for different proposals to two-minute responses on how to tackle the toughest problems such as solid waste.

The results of a straw poll conducted at the end of the two-hour forum show Councilwoman JoAnn Yukimura as the leading candidate for mayor, followed by county Parks and Recreation Director Bernard Carvalho, Councilman Mel Rapozo and Kapa'a resident Rolf Bieber.

The top seven candidates for council, according to the poll, are (from highest vote-getter to lowest): Councilman Tim Bynum, Lani Kawahara, interim Council Chair Jay Furfaro, Derek Kawakami, KipuKai "Leslie" Kualii, Bruce Pleas and George Thronas. See sidebar for the complete results.

The candidates unanimously agreed, by a show of hands, on the need for the county to establish seven-days-a-week bus service with additional routes during peak travel times.

Council candidate George Thronas said if elected he would pursue utilizing idle tour company and hotel buses to supplement the county's fleet.

Councilman Ron Kouchi pointed at the council's actions last budget session to set aside \$800,000 in a contingency fund to go toward new buses plus \$500,000 to expand services. He said it seems like a good idea to have private sector help, but a court order restricting such would need to be overturned.

Council candidate Bruce Pleas said he would implement proven technologies to have electric buses and routes for other electric vehicles that



Nathan Eagle/The Garden Island

The broad field of Kaua'i County Council and mayoral candidates seeking election this fall field questions from emcees Andrea Brower and Keone Kealoha at the Eco-Roundtable forum, Tuesday at the War Memorial Convention Hall. Solid waste was identified as a top issue the county must address.

could plug in to solar panel covered car ports to recharge.

The mayoral and council candidates also found common ground in opposing the Hawaii Superferry's return until an independent environmental impact statement is completed. A state-mandated environmental assessment is underway.

But after a show of hands vote and a standing ovation from members of the audience, a few candidates backtracked and said they took issue with the question and wished they would have had time to qualify their answers.

The question was: "Do you support the return of the Superferry to Kaua'i prior to completion of an independent, full EIS, not the Act 2 environmental assessment?"

Council candidate Christobel Kealoha said she does not believe the inter-island passenger-vehicle catamaran is "entirely bad," adding that she was hurt by the demonstrations last August that forced the ferry to return to Honolulu on its second trip to the island.

Rapozo changed his vote to undecided.

The mayoral candidates were asked if they support the county's integrated solid waste management plan.

Carvalho said he did, noting the need to implement curbside recycling, a material recovery facility and a waste-to-energy

plant.

After visiting a few waste-to-energy facilities on the Mainland, Rapozo said he feels confident that they are a safe and effective means of burning the island's trash and transforming it into energy. With the county's landfill in Kekaha nearing capacity, he said time is of the essence.

Yukimura and Bieber disagreed with Carvalho and Rapozo's support for the waste-to-energy facility, but backed the rest of the plan.

Yukimura, who served as Kaua'i's mayor from 1988 to 1994, pointed at her past accomplishments in creating recycling and composting projects. She said the county has a plan "sitting on the shelf" that would set forth ways to reuse and recycle more to divert rubbish from the landfill.

She said the right administration can roll out such a plan to reduce more than 35 percent of the waste going into the landfill.

The council candidates were also asked about genetically modified organisms.

Incumbent Tim Bynum said that although he is a firm believer in science, he has become increasingly concerned about genetically engineered food the more he has learned about the controversial issue.

As a councilman, he voted in support of a resolution urging

Candidates fared at forum poll

The Eco-Roundtable's straw poll results from the candidates forum Tuesday (number of votes in parentheses):

MAYOR

JoAnn Yukimura (79), Bernard Carvalho (46), Mel Rapozo (22), Rolf Bieber (5)

COUNCIL

Tim Bynum (93), Lani Kawahara (91), Jay Furfaro (74), Derek Kawakami (65), KipuKai "Leslie" Kualii (64), Bruce Pleas (60), George Thronas (56), Scott Mijares (50), Ron Kouchi (46), Christobel Kealoha (41), Bill "Kaipo" Asing (38), Ken Taylor (34), Rhoda Libre (34), Linda Pasadava (28), Robert Bartolo (22), Dickie Chang (21), Harry Kaneakua (14), Daryl Kaneshiro (13), John Hoff (9), Ron Agor (7), Bob Cariffe (4), Nancy McMahon (0)

the state to ban research on GMO taro.

"If we can make a gene to feed the world, I don't want it owned by Monsanto," Bynum said, noting reports of economic coercion by GMO giants. "There's too many questions for me now to be a supporter of GMOs."

For candidate Scott Mijares, the answer was easy.

"Kaua'i is not your experimentation laboratory," he said. "They're getting a free ride and potentially impacting all of our lives more than we'll ever know. If they were really earnest in feeding the world ... they wouldn't be so active in defending their patents."

Each council candidate — 19 of the 22 on the ballot attended the forum — was allowed a brief period to share their top priority if elected to serve on the seven-member legislative body. The responses included traffic, solid waste, land use, development, affordable housing, wasteful government spending and property taxes.

See Forum, A7

Forum

Continued from A1

“The top issue today is our solid waste program,” said council candidate Bill “Kaipo” Asing, who stepped down from the council last month to serve as interim mayor until Dec. 1. “We’ve had studies after studies and have not handled the problem in a proper manner. I will be looking at it in the coming year.”

Council candidate Robert Bartolo of Kapa’a said he wants to foster more affordable housing so his daughter, and youth facing similar situations, have a place to return from college.

Council candidate Derek Kawakami said he would implement amendments to force the county to adhere more to the 2000 General Plan, a guiding document that envisions open view planes and compact town centers.

When asked about banning gated communities - which was proposed last year in a bill proposed by the late Mayor Bryan Baptiste’s administration -

council candidates Ken Taylor, Bob Cariffe, Bartolo and Kualii indicated their strong support for such a measure.

“Communities are made up of many different factions ... they should mingle together,” Taylor said.

In another support question, Chang, Hoff and Kawakami by a show of hands were the only candidates who would not support a county ban on plastic shopping bags as is under consideration in Maui and law in San Francisco.

The field of candidates will be narrowed down to the top 14 for council and the top two for mayor after the Sept. 20 primary election. The general election is Nov. 4.

Various organizations have planned to host additional candidate forums in upcoming weeks.

To read the candidates’ written responses to questions, visit ecoroundtable.org

► **Nathan Eagle**, staff writer, can be reached at 245-3681 (ext. 224) or neagle@kuaipubco.com