



Teixeira, Zimmerman face off at forum

By Mike Hodgson/Associate Editor mhodgson@santamariatimes.com | Posted: Wednesday, October 6, 2010 11:30 am

Supplemental water, traffic, the Willow Road extension, incorporation, park expansion and law enforcement were some of the Nipomo issues residents asked San Luis Obispo County's 4th District supervisor candidates at a forum Monday.

A little more than two dozen people attended the forum for Paul Teixeira of Nipomo and Mike Zimmerman of Arroyo Grande in the Nipomo Community Services District board room.

Teixeira is a 42-year resident of the South County, a county parks commissioner, Lucia Mar Unified School District trustee and operations manager — currently on requested leave — for Kaman Industrial Technologies in Santa Maria.

Zimmerman is a 39-year resident of the county, a self-employed rancher, business owner and lawyer who practices business and real estate law and estate planning. He was an unsuccessful candidate for the 33rd Assembly District seat in 2004.

The two are vying to replace Katcho Achadjian, who is running for the 33rd Assembly seat being vacated by Sam Blakeslee, in the Nov. 2 General Election.

Although questions posed at Monday night's forum ranged from the county budget and employee pensions to offshore oil and the homeless shelter, most focused on issues specific to Nipomo.

Asked about the project to pipe water from Santa Maria to the Mesa and alternatives, neither expressed much support, instead calling for a desalination plant and more use of graywater.

Zimmerman said the pipeline project relies on state water supplies, which he doesn't believe are reliable.

"A desalination plant will take time to get through, but if we don't get started on desal, we'll all have to be rationing water," he said.

Teixeira said he thinks the pipeline cost is excessive, but the water is necessary to sustain growth.

"I don't like the way it's going because of the way the cost has escalated, from five to six million to 40 million (dollars)," he said. "We're piping in borrowed water."

Asked if they favor using county funds to push the Willow Road extension all the way to Thompson Avenue, Zimmerman said he doesn't believe there are county funds to do that and believes the money will ultimately have to come from developer fees.

"I think that's something the county owes to the people of the South County," Teixeira said, noting a lot of road fees went into the general fund. "I think some of that needs to come back to finish Willow Road."

Asked how they would solve the challenge of providing law enforcement to the community, Teixeira said Nipomo needs a sheriff's substation to reduce the response time of the two deputies that currently patrol the entire South County at night.

"People should be allowed to carry a gun and have a gun in the home," he said. "I don't have a problem with people bearing arms. It's part of the rural lifestyle."

Zimmerman said he doesn't think the county can afford to put in a new sheriff's substation without cutting personnel or programs.

He said he'd prefer to use state and federal grants to boost the gang task force, increase volunteer patrols and develop more youth programs.

He said he also would favor more concealed weapon carry permits "so people can protect themselves."