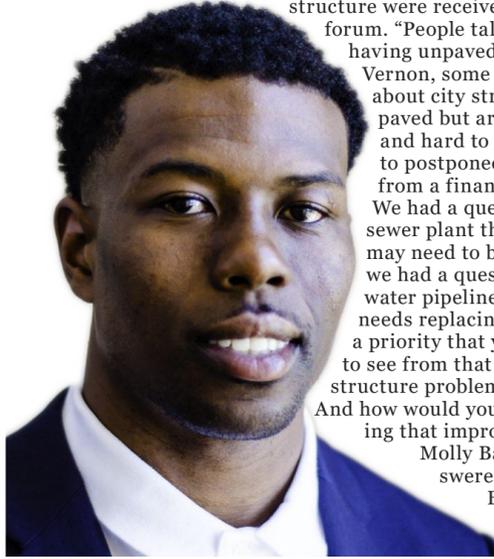


# City commission hopefuls respond to infrastructure issues

The second question at the city commission candidate forum had to do with infrastructure. The moderator, Daniel Walker, said that several questions on infrastructure were received prior to the forum. "People talked about still having unpaved streets in



Vernon, some people talked about city streets that are paved but are very bumpy and hard to drive on... due to postponed maintenance from a financial situation. We had a question about a sewer plant that is aging and may need to be replaced; we had a question about the water pipeline that possibly needs replacing. Do you have a priority that you would like to see from that list of infrastructure problems in Vernon? And how would you propose funding that improvement? Molly Baldwin answered first.

Baldwin: Thank you. I spoke about the 2008 Texas

Engineering Extension Survey where they advocated for a street a year. So, sealing we started with, we're starting to do paving but if we do one a year, that would be great. Restoration of the sewer plant is in process. We should continue to do it. I know that they have computer hardware upgrades and pumps that need replacement and kudos to the Water Department because the Texas Water Development Board offers that low interest loan or possible forgiveness for claiming repairs and replacement and this is our third year we've gone for it so hopefully by continually going before that board, we'll get some aid in that and we can start planning or replacing the water lines under our street. If our mains coming in are antiquated, we know the ones under the street are because they've been breaking. Money needs to be set aside, those are some of the priorities. If we don't have water and a way to get rid of the waste, we don't have a viable Vernon.

Don Smith: I too am concerned about our waste water treatment plant. It's been good for a long time. But as we all know, the structures that look strong, after a period of time, begin to wear. The structure of the entity, the waste water plant, the building, over a period of time, it's going to wear, it's going to break down, there's things that are going to break. That's just a fact of life and when that happens, we're gonna have to have the money to replace those things, whether it's to build a new building or to try to take care of the old building the best way that we can. And that's going to depend how much money we have in the coffers. If we have the money to rebuild a brand new one, then, you know, we can do that. But if we don't, we have to consider what steps we need to take to take care of that. Our water lines and pipes are beginning to show the need for replacement because of the wear that they've had. There's just as old as the waste water plant is, maybe older. I think that in one of the city commissioners' meetings, we had a lady who had a water line break in her business and, you know, it happens at the most inconvenient times but it seems like it's just inconvenient for something to bust like that and it was cold and right before Christmas so we're looking at needing to repair those pipes. What about our streets? Well if you live on a street that's got dirt and it's not paved at all, then you're concerned about their property and if you're on the street and you've got potholes that haven't been fixed well, potholes can only be fixed for so long before you have to decide what you're going to do with that and when that comes, again, is the money going to be there to pay that.

Darien Williams: That's a really good question, something that I have been looking into really hard, is the water situation... I think we're doing a good job with trying to upgrade our infrastructure pieces at a time like I said earlier we do have Lexington Street Project that is going to be underway... The Lexington Street Water Pipeline is gonna happen, and so that's a great thing for a certain area of our town. With the sewage situation or with our water plant situation, talks have begun and have been underway on how we're going to approach fixing that situation. It is a health situation actually so, if we have ran down infrastructure or something that needs to be looked at, we are going to hop on that, that's something that we have to do being a health issue. I would say just have your eyes and ears open listening at the city meetings on updates on the sewage plant and the water plant being upgraded but the water structure and the water pipelines on Lexington Street is underway. Once that's done, we will look at, according to the citizens' feedback, other parts and other water lines. There was a lady's house or business, she attended at the last meeting, [water line] that busted in her house so that's unacceptable. The city did decide to take care of those expenses so things like that will be taken care of in due time I just ask that our people be patient.

...  
 '...there should be no reason why we're still on dirt roads.'

Darien Williams  
 City Commission Candidate

Moderator: Let me pin all of you all down then. There's no overall issue that you don't see the city addressing right now -- that you say, if I'm elected, this is going to get fixed or this is going to happen. That all of you believe that the city is on the right path or has the right plans or you're deferring to city staff. Does anybody object to that?

Darien: Definitely, I didn't get to get to the unpaved roads. There are unpaved roads especially in my precinct in the east side of town and on the north side of town that need to be addressed immediately. That's something that I'm going to definitely work with our city with and the engineers and construction workers. ... We're going to hit one street at a time and get that situation taken care of. It should've been something that, as great a town that we live in, all neighborhoods should have paved, smooth streets to play on, there should be no reason why we're still on dirt roads. That's something that I'm going to definitely look at.

Don: Daniel, I was just thinking about the waste water plant, EPA has codes and things that they check in to, I'm sure that the waste water plant has things it really needs to work on... I think that we really need to work on trying to get that taken care



Darien Williams, along with Don Smith and Molly Baldwin, faced public questions during the Vernon Daily Record's candidate forum late in March. Williams said he could help bridge the gap between the younger and older generations.

Payton McCormick/Vernon Record

of as quickly as we can. I know that we are in bad array and also know that our water pipes are slowly getting replaced but I think we need to also think about the fact that if the EPA comes in there and says, hey you're waste water plant is not where it needs to be and, you know, you're going to have to do something about it.

Molly: Just the three things, most important, is to get those streets paved because it's a good look for Vernon. Plan for a replacement of that water line, it can't last forever and then start planning for replacing under the street, water mains.

**TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE VERNON BETTER.**

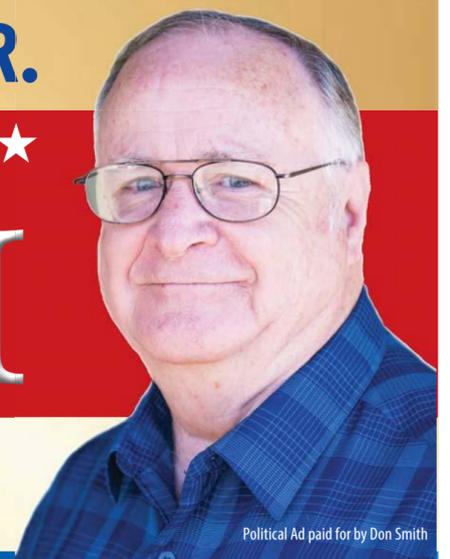
Vote

Don  
**SMITH**

★★★★★

★★★★★

**For City Commissioner Pct. 1**



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