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Mayoral candidates keep their answers short

15 ARE RUNNING: Four of those failed to show for Sunday's forum.

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Whittling down the crowded field of 15 mayoral candidates took another step forward Sunday during a well-attended candidate forum at Central Lutheran Church near downtown Anchorage.

For starters, four names on the ballot -- Richard Wanda, Larry Shooshanian, Merica Hiatcu and Bob "Joker" Lupo -- were no-shows.

That left 11 candidates to field questions directed toward them by members of the non-denominational Anchorage Faith & Action Congregations Together, or AFACT, group, which sponsored the forum.

Limiting each candidate to a 60-second response to each question, however, made for some lightning-fast and highly condensed answers. So here's a scorecard from one reporter's notebook:

Most Overtly Religious Candidate: Jacob Seth Kern.

Dressed in his trademark yellow goggles and cardboard "Kern for Mayor" vest, the self-described inventor of an earth-saving mechanism that generates wireless electricity invoked the phrase "Praise Jesus" more than 20 times. In his closing statement, Kern also assured the audience, "I don't sin, pillage, kill or adulterate."

Most Entrepreneurial Candidate: Dominic Lee.

President and CEO of the Anchorage-based Little Susitna Construction and Engineering Co., Lee has made his proposal to build a \$2.8 billion Turnagain Arm Tidal Bridge Power Project the mainstay of his campaign. On Sunday he held up posters of the project while responding to questions about police patrols, homelessness and youth programs.

Most Affable Candidate: Phil Isley.

With his long hair, salt-and-pepper beard and work shirt open at the collar, the 53-year-old aircraft mechanic sat in casual contrast to most of the other male candidates tailored in suits and ties (with the exception of Kern). And his demeanor was reflective and calm. He noted that "the majority of people" in Anchorage don't have a support group, and the city could do more to fight sexual assault.

Most Angry Candidate: Paul Kendall.

Seated to the right of Isley, the self-described unemployed "revolutionist" lashed out repeatedly at six mayoral candidates he described as municipal insiders, blaming them for everything from coddling the homeless to technical difficulties with the microphone system. Kendall described the city's soup kitchen clientele as "too lazy to work, too scared to steal."

Most Family Friendly Candidate: Billy Ray Powers.

A self-described father of "seven well-adjusted children," Powers said he was a family man first and that the struggles of everyday families were "the root of the problem." He worried about where the recession is leading the community. Help each other, he said. "Everyone in this room has to consider themselves humanitarians."

The rest of the field:

Most Cop-Savvy Candidate (tie): Walt Monegan and Paul Honeman.

Monegan, the city's former police chief, said Anchorage needs "a quarter more" police officers than it currently has. Honeman, a retired APD lieutenant, echoed Monegan's support for a community-based police patrol program in Mountain View. But he also urged listeners to ignore mayoral race polls and reject "the myth" that "he or she who has the most money wins."

Most Home-Grown Candidate (tie): Eric Croft and Dan Sullivan.

Both Croft and Sullivan touted their "born here" ties to Anchorage (as did Monegan), but the two differed philosophically. Croft, a municipal prosecutor and former state legislator, expressed his hope that Anchorage residents would join together in community and shun selfishness. Sullivan, a businessman and nine-year Assembly member, said some problems, like homelessness, require "tough love" and some crimes, like vandalism, need a "zero-tolerance policy ... like Rudy Guiliani did in New York."

Most Optimistic Candidate (tie): Sheila Selkregg and Matt Claman.

Both Selkregg, an educator, former city planner and current assembly member, and Claman, an attorney, former assembly member and current mayor, voiced confidence that programs to address crime, homelessness and the special needs of working families are doable. Claman spoke of creating more after-school programs for kids and using the recently released United Way plan to combat homelessness. Said Selkregg: "But it's one thing to talk about what you want to do and it's another thing to know how to do it."