

Forum for mayoral candidates is canceled

By Sheryl Edelen
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The only scheduled public forum solely for Shively's three mayoral candidates within city limits has been canceled because two of the candidates declined to attend.

But another one has been scheduled for downtown.

The Shively Area Business Association had planned to hold its forum April 13 to hear from Mayor Sherry Conner and her two challengers in the May 18 Democratic primary, Shively Councilwoman Beverly Burton and former Councilman Richard McDonald.

"It's a shame, because everyone was really excited about giving the candidates a chance to share their vision for Shively and answer questions from the public," association President Polly Cole said.

The forum was to have been held at Butler High School. It would have been free and open to the public.

Burton and McDonald told association officials that they couldn't attend because they had prior commitments. Neither would be **more** specific about their conflicts in interviews with the newspaper.

"I asked if they had another date, and they didn't," Burton said.

Cole said the 120-member association invited the candidates nearly two months before the event and wouldn't have had time to reschedule it.

Burton, 48, who has served on Shively's council since 2006 and is a teacher at Stuart Middle School in Valley Station, said she was simply too busy with professional meetings and speaking engagements to attend.

"I'm booked on through June," she said. "You wouldn't believe all the calls I've received. I've been booking since January."

Burton said she was scheduled to speak at a union event last weekend and had recently spoken at a Shively Democratic Club meeting.

McDonald, 57, served on the City Council from 1994 through 2002, when he launched an unsuccessful mayoral bid against then-Mayor Jim Jenkins. In 2005, after Jenkins had resigned and Conner was appointed mayor, McDonald was

appointed to her vacated council seat. He lost his last council re-election bid in 2008.

McDonald said he had a personal commitment that would make it impossible for him to attend. Cole said that McDonald had offered to submit answers to questions that would be read at the forum, but she said that would defeat the purpose of the event.

“If I was running for mayor, I would want the opportunity to let the people know what my vision was for the city,” Cole said. “I feel like if the people are going to hear of their hopes and dreams for Shively, they need to hear from their mouths.”

Conner and McDonald are slated to participate in a forum to be held Thursday in downtown Louisville during the monthly meeting of the **Metropolitan Louisville Women's Political Caucus**.

Program coordinator Virginia Woodward said because Conner is one of only a few female mayors in the state, it was important to place a spotlight on the election and its candidates. The group works to increase women's participation in the political process and recruit, train and support women for election and appointment to public office.

“After we heard that the business association was canceling its event because two candidates weren't participating, it became even more important,” Woodward said. “If you're a serious candidate, you shouldn't have any problem standing before people and speaking.”