Familiar candidates tout experience in race for Menomonie mayor

By Pamela Powers
Menomonie News Bureau

MENOMONIE — The city's mayoral race pits a former mayor with lots of experience against an incumbent who says his fresh approaches to challenges are what the city needs.
Both Mayor Randy Knaack, who defeated Dennis Kropp for the position two years ago, and Kropp say they have the energy and enthusiasm to lead the city into the future.

Both candidates advanced to the April 3 general election after being the two top vote-getters in the Feb. 21 primary. In that race, Knaack received 669 votes compared with Kropp's 516.

"I am still positive about moving Menomonie forward," Knaack said.

Kropp points to his record as mayor for 12 years and his previous City Council experience as reasons voters should choose him.

"I think I have more ideas to improve the city than the current administration," he said.

Kropp said his track record while he was mayor speaks for itself. During his tenure, Menomonie attracted industry and other business, started dog, skateboard and water parks and placed playground equipment in all city parks.

However, Knaack said the No. 1 issue facing the city — algae blooms on Lake Menomin that foul the body of water and discourage recreation — has been long-standing. The mayor has helped build a machine to clean algae the lake and said he has been proactive in pushing for solutions to the problem.

Knaack said he is working to raise awareness of the lake's water quality and create dialogue about upstream pollution.

"Something needs to be done now," he said.

Knaack suggested improving the appearance of downtown buildings by soliciting corporate sponsorships. Cleaning up downtown and sprucing up the city would make Menomonie more of a tourism destination, he said.

"I want people to come here because they want to go through every store," Knaack said.

Kropp said he believes city administration and the City Council can work more closely on city initiatives.

"I think I have some personal skills that can address that so the council and administration can work in collaboration," he said.
Balancing city services with a tight budget will prove challenging in upcoming years, both candidates said.

"We need to have a community forum to bring people together to decide what services they want and how much they are willing to pay for them," Kropp said.

Knaack said the city has seen relatively low tax increases during his tenure because city staff has worked to contain spending. Overtime costs in some departments could be curtailed, he said.

Neither candidate supports changing the city's current alcohol license review process, particularly a proposal that would require license holders to appear before the City Council for minor violations. The candidates also agree that a proposal to allow city residents to raise hens isn't a major issue.

Powers can be reached at 715-556-9018 or pamela.powers@ecpc.com.