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Baptist Church. 1B.

The Anniston Star

Friday, October 2, 2020

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Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star

Anniston Mayor Jack Draper speaks during a forum at Anniston High School Thursday night ahead of the city's Oct. 6 runoff election.

Anniston runoff candidates face off in final forum

Empty businesses, houses seen as one problem

BY TIM LOCKETTE

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Jay Jenkins wants an independent regional authority to run Anniston's airport.

Demetric Roberts wants a city service that would clean up abandoned lots for a fee — paid voluntarily by the landowner.

David Reddick wants Anniston City Council members to be able to see Facebook comments in real time during their council meetings.

Those were some of the new ideas floated by candidates for Anniston's

council and mayoral seats Thursday at Anniston High school, in the last large candidate forum before the Oct. 6 municipal runoff election. About 30 people showed up at the socially distanced event, where they heard from candidates for three of the city's council wards and two mayoral hopefuls.

"I'm pleased to tell you that our crime rate has gone down significantly," said Mayor Jack Draper, who's running for his second term. "The city, working with the police department and the U.S. attorney's office and the district attorney's office

have really worked to get 'alpha' drug dealers off the streets."

Throughout the campaign, Draper has opened his speeches with mention of Anniston's crime rate, which for years was among the highest in the state. Police earlier this year announced a sharp drop in the crime rate over 2019, a change they attribute to a new city partnership with federal agencies designed to get the most prolific offenders off the streets.

Draper also cited the growth of the Anniston fire training academy,

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Alabama set to break records for absentee, in-person voting

BY TIM LOCKETTE

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The rising use of absentee ballots will keep many Alabamians at home for Election Day on Nov. 3, but the state's top election official said he still expects a larger-than-usual number of in-person voters as well.

"We're going to have a record-shattering crowd at the polls," Secretary of State John Merrill said.

Gov. Kay Ivey on Wednesday issued an executive order allowing local election officials to begin counting absentee ballots earlier than usual during the Nov. 3 election. Counting will begin at 7 a.m., when polls open, rather than after polls close at 7 p.m.

The move was part of a larger set of orders dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The state allows people to vote absentee if they cite concerns about the

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Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star/File

Anniston residents head into the polls for August's elections at Wiggins Community Center. Secretary of State John Merrill says Alabama could see a record turnout on Election Day in November.

COMMENTARY

Editors should be their community's best friend

When my beloved University of Tennessee Volunteers hired Jeremy Pruitt as football coach, I wrote a column wondering why they would pick "an Alabama guy," of all people.

Pruitt was the former defensive coordinator of the Crimson Tide before leaving for Knoxville in 2017. He got off to a rocky start on good ol' Rocky Top, with two mediocre seasons before settling in.

Later in the same column for my previous newspaper, The Daily Herald in Columbia, Tenn., I explained that I would rather beat Alabama any time than win the national championship.

The Crimson Tide has beaten Tennessee 13 times in a row in football. It's excruciating. I still can't believe that Alabama's 6-foot-5, 354-pound Terrance Cody blocked the Vols' potential game-winning field goal with four seconds left in 2009.

When I attended Tennessee, I remember watching players carry former coach Johnny Majors off the field when the Vols upset Alabama in 1982 for the first time in 12 years. Students paraded goal posts down Cumberland Avenue — the main drag on campus — and



James Bennett

Editor's Notes

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COMMENTARY

A priest with COVID-19 and a church who needs him



Trent Penny/The Anniston Star/File

Rev. Robert Fowler stands inside the sanctuary of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Jacksonville on June 30, 2019. Fowler contracted COVID-19 weeks before St. Luke's was to resume in-person services.

The pandemic hit and the globe stopped turning — overnight, it seemed — and the bishop who instructs St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Jacksonville issued a wise edict: Close the doors.

So St. Luke's priest, the Rev. Robert Fowler, closed the doors.

His church hasn't held an in-person worship service since March 8. "None of us knew it was going to go this long," he said.

Seven months, and still going. Fowler, a 60-year-old Georgian who's been at St. Luke's nearly five years, wasn't a virulent anti-masker, but he was cautiously curious about the paranoia. Masks? Shutdowns?



Phillip Tutor

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Beverly Gaines, Lincoln
Mary Doris Cantrell Jones, Dublin, Va.
Lewis Allen Kerr, Anniston

Edwin Frank Plemons, Pelham
Daniel Jacob Schall, Ragland
Lee J. "Jock" Swain, Oxford
Owell Forney Willingham, Jacksonville

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HIGH: 70 LOW: 46

Emma Martin,
Pleasant Grove Elementary

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