

Ashland, Shoener North Rapid talks on civic center

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By RON BENDER

Journal Staff Writer

It didn't take long for the discussion to shift from Ward 4 candidates' qualifications to their stand on the proposed sales tax revision at Tuesday's meeting of the North Rapid Civic Association.

Incumbent Rapid City Alderman Jerry Shoener and his opponent in Tuesday's municipal election, Frank Ashland, were guest speakers. Shoener listed developments he has helped realize for Ward 4 during his three terms and Ashland listed his qualifications, before launching an attack on the revised sales tax for financing of a civic center.

Shoener said

he stood for progressive, but not extravagant government, and said planned federal, private and city construction projects indicate Rapid City is on the move again.

He cited street improvements in Ward 4 in recent years and pledged to continue to work for county and federal participation in street construction.



Shoener



Ashland

Ashland, a Rapid City businessman for 17 years, recited his 10-point platform, in which he pledged to: be responsive to the people, return common sense government, be thrifty and economize, insure that the fiasco of the past not be repeated, protect the people, narrow the credibility gap, work to remove the city and state sales tax from medicine, serve only one master — the people, and oppose a sales tax increase.

Ashland said he was in favor of a civic center but not of the proposed financing plan. He displayed charted figures which he said showed the removal of the city's 1 per cent sales tax on groceries and medicine would not save people money since the 1½ per cent tax that would be placed on other items would more than offset the grocery-medicine savings.

Ashland told the group Mayor Don Barnett "expects you to sign a blank check" for the civic center, and said he had been told a new arena is planned at the Central States Fairground which would be in competition with the city's civic center.

Shoener challenged that statement, saying the fair board is controlled by the Pennington County Board of Commissioners, which uses only tax dollars for any county projects. He said commissioners have informed him no large arena-type structure is planned.

Shoener said research by local citizens groups and city officials has shown the sales tax route is the best for financing local improvements, since the sales tax is also used to provide property tax relief. He said the civic center would be the

His alternative would be for the city to buy the land for the civic center, then lease it to private enterprises at a nominal fee. The facility would be built privately, with a tax moratorium given its builders to make the package more attractive.

Questioned from the floor, Ashland said research into this alternative proposal had been limited and he had no specific private group in mind for the financing. He said his plan was worthy of consideration and urged more study before the city goes into the civic center business.

Ward 4 alderman Art LaCroix responded from the floor that private industry financing has been considered by the researching committee and was nothing new.

Shoener was asked to give a construction timetable if the sales tax revision passes. He said the revised sales tax would go into effect either May 1 or July 1, depending on legislative requirements, that the city would immediately buy the land for the site, hire an architect, and hopefully break ground before the end of 1972.

At the conclusion of the program a straw vote was held, with 20 persons in favor of the revised sales tax and nine opposed.