

Dr. Tague Questions Hammond Town Board's Budget Secrecy

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BY MATT MCALLISTER

HAMMOND - Republican Town Council hopeful Dr. James R. Tague is accusing Hammond Town officials of developing the town's budget in secret.

"Like most organizations, the budget is not developed at their regular meetings, per se, but at special, closed-door, budget meetings," he claimed. "Once I get on the board, I am interested in seeing how it gets done."

A reporter who asked for a copy of Hammond's preliminary draft budget on Monday was turned down by Hammond's town board.

Property values, taxes, the development of the town's budget, and the format of town board meetings, are

other issues that interest Dr. Tague.

Dr. Tague and fellow Republican Douglas E. Delosh are facing Independent Submarine Veterans Party candidate Pieter Visscher and incumbent Democratic Councilor Ronald Tulley II in the November election.

The four candidates are competing for two openings on the town board.

Democratic Councilor Russell Stewart is not seeking reelection.

Spiking taxes in Hammond, according to Mr. Tague, have residents concerned.

"I've heard concerns from citizens about the tax structure set-up," he says. "Specifically, between waterfront and non-waterfront valuations and

how the town and county are arriving at 100 percent valuation and revaluating every year."

Dr. Tague says changes are also needed in the format of the monthly board meetings.

"The community needs to be informed about what is happening," he says. "From community participation and answering people's questions in an open forum, to disclosing all the issues at the meetings - it's just not happening. There's room for improvement and better communication," Dr. Tague said.

A third issue that interests Dr. Tague, he said, is the development of the town budget. Mr. Visscher has not returned several calls from the newspaper.