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SECTION B

Candidates forum a civil affair

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SOUTH HADLEY – Selectboard candidates Robert G. Judge and Selectman Richard A. Constant outlined their positions last night during a forum at Loomis Village that was so civil that one candidate endorsed the other.

Constant said during the nearly 1½-hour question and answer session that he hopes Judge, the aide to state Rep. John W. Scibak, D-South Hadley, joins him on the board.

Judge, Constant and Select-

man Carlene C. Hamlin are competing in a three-way race for the two seats open on the Selectboard in the April 7 election.

Loomis Village resident Theodore B. Belsky, who moderated the forum, said Hamlin could not adjust her schedule to attend.

Constant said he got a start in public life while working for passage of a Proposition 2½ debt exclusion override to allow renovation and expansion at the town's high school and middle school.

Judge, who does constituent

service for Scibak, said he wants to be of further service to the community.

When asked about the formation of a charter commission to consider changing the town's form of government, Constant said he prefers the present situation, which includes Town Meeting and a town administrator. However, he did say he would be willing to consider a town manager.

Judge said he would like to see a form of government that keeps the best aspects of town meetings but is also more efficient and accountable.

Both Constant and Judge

strongly supported having the town adopt the state Community Preservation Act, which would provide a 3 percent property tax surcharge to raise money for special projects.

As for the town's Ledges Golf Club, which runs \$500,000-plus annual deficits, Judge said that he voted for the project when it was presented at the 1999 Town Meeting, while Constant voted against it.

Judge also said people like Constant deserve a lot of credit for putting up with "a great deal of flak and criticism" over

the course.

Judge also said that he voted against building a permanent clubhouse at the course because he did not feel comfortable with the proposal.

Constant said that although some residents want to sell the course, the town would have to find a 244 acre site to set aside as open space. The town must also give back the \$500,000 state grant used to build the course. Although the deficit for fiscal 2008 was projected at \$540,000, Constant said the figure looks to be closer to \$460,000.