

SR City Council Race—the guard may change!

“Neighborhood Speak”-----by Steve Patterson—Federation of SR Neighborhoods

On Tues November 3rd with the upcoming San Rafael City Council Election we will probably witness a quiet shift in power on the Council itself. At present, there are 5 candidates running for two seats. When one looks past the 5 candidates to see who has realistic chances of winning, it comes down to 3 candidates running for two seats, in the opinion of many.

For the past couple of years Cyr Miller and Barbara Heller have been strong advocates for the style, substance and policies of Mayor Al Boro. And with three votes (out of a total of five) the Mayor’s agenda has been actively promoted as the business of San Rafael. It has been pro-business, pro-development (in many cases), and very much putting neighborhoods on back-burner status. Cyr Miller has decided to step down and Barbara Heller has decided to run for a 5th—4 year term. Many of Barbara’s votes have often been viewed as rubber stamp votes as endorsements for the Mayor. It is not often that an incumbent ever does not get re-elected to the SR City Council. But might this be one of those times? Thus far, neighborhood leaders seem to be throwing support behind either Marc Levine or Gary Ford or both. Surprisingly, few neighborhood people have aligned themselves with Barbara Heller, which is quite telling after 4 terms in office.

The primary issues in this campaign are: Measure G—the \$88 million bond measure to fix SR’s obsolete critical facilities, Marin Clean Energy (green sources of electricity), neighborhood integrity, City finances (revenue, pensions, priorities, etc) and to a certain extent the Dutra Quarry. Where there appears to be divergence amongst the candidates is Measure G. This extremely expensive bond measure appears to be in trouble, given the scale, timing, along with the economic times we find ourselves immersed in. It requires 2/3 support by the voters.

Barbara Heller—supports Measure G:

Barbara’s campaign would have you believe that it is appropriate to thank her for making “SR a great place to live and work and raise a family”. If you believe that, then the question might be how much did Barbara contribute to that? Many think while this was particularly apropos in the past, it may not be quite so true now, and the Mayor may have had more responsibility for the renaissance and for making it happen. Clearly, the renaissance is “slipping” as the downtown and the retail base continues to dramatically decline. However, never sell an incumbent short and Barbara has served on the Council for 16 years and is seeking her 5th—4 year term. She is the only woman candidate.

Marc Levine—supports Measure G:

Marc is a young and energetic candidate who literally has shown up at almost any city/neighborhood meeting where there have been more than two people over the last 6 months. He has a cadre of people who have been knocking on doors along with himself. His candidacy has reached a maturity and eloquence, even though sometimes his solutions for San Rafael sounds a bit like rhetoric rather than real substance. He has gotten an array of endorsements (both individuals and organizations) across the political spectrum. One wonders how Marc will balance both an endorsement for the Marin Builders and the Sierra Club, for example, and who he might be beholden to. He seems to have aligned himself to current council members, Damon Connolly and Greg Brockbank and their positions. Even with a thin background of community involvement in SR after only a being a resident for 5 years, many think Marc could be the top vote getter in the November election, certainly the top fund raiser due to his boundless energy.

Gary Ford—opposes Measure G:

Gary could be the dark horse in this campaign. Many like to put candidates into these preordained silos, but Gary is complex as well as passionate. He characterizes his candidacy as “socially conscious, but also fiscally cautious”, so for those that like to slot people into neat silos, Gary is a challenge. He is a community banker, with a strong background in finance. With the City in dire financial shape, a financially oriented city council member may be a nice fit. Gary also has some innovative views that other candidates have not proposed. He has raised significant funds and has a campaign that has been picking up steam. He has specific ideas and programs regarding many of the key issues facing SR. If he is elected it likely will be referendum on the current Boro/Miller/Heller block of three votes and the lock it has had on the current council for an extended period of time.

Eric Holm—supports Measure G/David Mayor—opposes Measure G/Whitney Hoyt—dropped out of the race:

Both Eric and David are quite fluent in the issues and score points at candidate forums. Both seem quite competent with strong professional backgrounds. However neither campaign seems to be actively working to get endorsements, raise campaign funds or create much web presence for their campaigns. Whitney Hoyt almost immediately dropped out of the race, but unfortunately her name will remain on the ballot and will likely siphon off votes.

So that is the overall assessment of the race as it closes in on Election Day. If you have

not attended a candidates forum, please consider doing that. There also is a televised forum appearing on Channel 27 that runs on a recurring basis. See scheduled times @ <http://cmcm.tv/elections2009> most importantly—GO VOTE!

Comments or suggestions—Steve Patterson, 453-6541, stephenpatterson.1@comcast.net