

SENDERA

SENDERA HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

DISTRICT 8 CANDIDATES Q&A

by Alison Carpenter

With Ellen Troxclair throwing in the political towel, District 8 is left with an open race for her replacement. There are currently four candidates running for her position on the city council. Troxclair has endorsed candidate Frank Ward, but as of this newsletter's deadline, he has only just been in contact with me.

Another candidate, Paige Ellis, has not responded to my inquiries.

The other two candidates, Bobby Levinski (<https://bobbyforaustin.com>) and Rich DePalma (<https://www.richdepalma.com>) provided in-depth answers to questions posed by Sendera residents, published here and minimally edited for space.

Responses from Ward (<https://www.wardforaustin.com>) and Ellis (<https://www.facebook.com/pg/PaigeForAustin>) will be published in the October issue if received by deadline.



Bobby Levinski.



Rich DePalma and family

Why are you seeking election to the city council?

Levinski: I live in the Woodstone Village subdivision immediately to the northeast of Sendera. Our neighborhoods are very similar. We sit in the same traffic, and we experience the same pressures from the rising costs of living. I think we can all agree that Southwest Austin is underserved and often ignored.

We need a council member who can work collaboratively with the rest of the City Council to deliver meaningful results. As a three-time council aide and a dedicated community advocate, I am positioned well to fight for the services that our southwestern neighborhoods need

(such as increased fire protection, public safety and parkland). And, I have the experience needed to reduce the mounting financial burdens on our homeowners, renters, and small businesses through property tax reform, focusing on our community's needs, and reducing the City's reliance on regressive fee structures.

DePalma: The main reason I am running is because I love our community, I have the needed experience, and through my decade's worth of community advocacy, feel very protective of our families and seniors.

I am also running out of frustration that even under the new single member district system, our community is still often ignored and deemed "good enough" when decisions are made on where to spend our limited tax dollars. Powerful Central Austin neighborhood leaders have always fought against building any infrastructure in Southwest Austin and that continues to this day. It is not by mistake that Southwest Austin has no city community/recreation/senior center, one pool, one small library, and all our schools are large and bursting at the seams. We can make smart infrastructure investments that meet the needs of our families while also protecting our environment. I am doing my part to change this as a community advocate but ultimately most of the work will need to be done as a strong and collaborative member on the city council.

We all see that Austin is going through a transformation and many residents understandably feel left out of the process. I am running to bring in ALL of our voices to city hall and to share the continuum of perspectives from our politically diverse community. That will not be an easy task, but I am proud of the political diversity of my campaign supporters, and I do not and will not take that for granted. Our community is stronger together than divided. I've worked with diverse groups to pass ordinances in the past, and we can accomplish more in the future.

Briefly describe your qualifications for this position.

Levinski: I became actively involved in City policy in 2005. Since then, I have worked as a policy advisor for three Austin City Council Members, including the current Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo and former Council Member Laura Morrison (who I worked for the longest). I will be the only candidate on the ballot with City Council-level experience, ready to start making progress on day one.

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“Call Before You Dig” 811

City of Austin Utilities (Electricity/Water/Waste)

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To report electrical outage
(need PowerLink # from your bill)..... 512-322-9100

Texas State Gas

Customer Service..... 1-800-700-2443
Gas Leaks 1-800-959-5325

Schools

Cowan Elementary 512-841-2700
Bailey Middle School..... 512-414-4990
Covington Middle School..... 512-414-3276
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Austin Public Library – Hampton Branch 512-974-9900



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Throughout my career, I have focused on making Austin more affordable for our families, protecting our neighborhoods from over-development, addressing traffic congestion, creating more parkland and open space, and increasing government transparency and accountability. I have played a key role in making growth pay for itself by requiring developers to pay the full costs of service for their infrastructure. And, I have identified millions in the city budget earmarked for corporate tax giveaways and helped shift those funds to address basic needs.

Now, I am an attorney who represents neighborhood and environmental organizations, working to protect Austin's quality of life. I earned a J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law, and I also have a B.A. in Economics and Urban Studies from UT.

DePalma: I have the unique mixture of professional, public service, and community experience needed to represent our SW Austin community. Professionally, for almost 20 years, I have worked with the local governments across the United States and Texas in improving solutions, services and outcomes. My clients have included cities like New York, Boston, and Pittsburgh.

My public service includes serving as Vice-Chair of the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Board for the past three years, as a commissioner on the Downtown Commission, as a committee member on the Balcones Canyonland Plan Citizens' Advisory Committee, and as a committee member on the AISD Facilities and Bond Planning Advisory Committee.

I am honored to have the support of many neighborhood presidents and PTA presidents across the district. My work includes co-founding Friends of Dick Nichols Park in 2007, leading a major solar carport project at St. Catherine's church, advocating to relieve our overcrowded schools, serving on the Baldwin Elementary PTA and Campus Advisory Council, increasing park funding in 2013, advocating for park spending throughout Southwest Austin, serving as both secretary and vice president of the Oak Hill Association of Neighborhoods, protecting critical water quality land in Travis County, advocating for SW Austin in the 2016 Transportation Bond, serving on the AISD Facilities and Bond Planning Advisory Committee and working on the 2017 AISD bond campaign. I am also currently the board president for TreeFolks, an organization that has planted over two million trees in Central Texas. I remain humbled by being named 2016 Oak Hill Citizen of the Year.

In addition to my community service, I have actively worked to understand citywide and regional issues and opportunities through two programs, CityWorks Academy (Class of 2013 w/Jimmy Flannigan) and Leadership Austin (Class of 2015 w/Alison Alter). I also have a BA in Political Science from the University of Arizona with a focus in local government policy.

How do you propose to solve the ongoing traffic congestion and transportation issues facing District 8?

Levinski: Traffic management starts with growth management. Southwest Austin is one of the most traffic-clogged areas of Austin, as well as the most environmentally-sensitive; it simply isn't an area that

makes sense for incentivizing significant growth and redevelopment through our land use policies. We need our City Council to better coordinate its land use planning with infrastructure planning to ensure that we are directing growth to areas where there is infrastructure in place to support it.

Road improvements in our neighborhoods should be designed to support local traffic. That includes coordinating with our school districts to provide safe routes to school for our children and regulating speeds on our neighborhood streets. We need to address our lane closure policies to avoid conflicts during rush hours and upgrade our intersections and arterials to avoid bottlenecks (e.g., along Brodie, Slaughter and William Cannon). And, as a long-time ally of the Fix 290 Coalition, I also support moving forward with a non-tolled, context-sensitive parkway to improve the "Y" in Oak Hill (intersection of 290 and 71).

DePalma: Anyone driving in Southwest Austin knows where the major issues are: the Oak Hill Y, the William Cannon exit, MoPac and Brodie Lane. I am proud to have worked on many of the solutions being developed at this time for those major challenges.

We also need to know and track where the arterial and local road traffic problems exist, making sure we work with the appropriate transportation agency. I have developed solid relationships at the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, TxDOT, the City of Austin Transportation Department, and CapMetro. Regarding the Sendera neighborhood, I want to immediately focus on getting that light [on Davis] so everyone can safely exit the neighborhood. The light is needed now and will only increase in need once the diamond interchange at Slaughter and MoPac is complete.

The 2016 Mobility Bond projects, coupled with TxDOT's current MoPac South extension, will begin to finally alleviate some of the traffic issues in Southwest Austin. I advocated for those projects and served on the advisory committee that raised funds and promoted the bond. As the former Vice-President of Oak Hill Association of Neighborhoods, I had an active role in creating a community driven vision for the Oak Hill Parkway project. I will continue to advocate for solutions that will provide needed relief, protect the feel of Southwest Austin, and are financially responsible.

Lastly, as parts of our urban core become more dense, I want to be sure that all areas of our city remain open and accessible. This means that while an increase in housing density may create vehicle-free walkable/bikeable routes, we need to maintain fair access for our commuters [through] infrastructure, varying transportation modalities, and access to parking and public spaces for all Austinites.

How do you propose to solve the affordability issues facing District 8?

Levinski: We're in the midst of an affordability crisis. Austinites all across our city are struggling to keep up with rising property taxes, rents, and the overall costs of living. Families are feeling increasingly more concerned about their ability to afford to stay in their homes and in their neighborhoods.

Part of the problem is the escalating burden that the state's recapture system is putting our taxpayers. This year, AISD paid over a half-billion

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Sendera

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dollars to pay for school districts across the state. This is unsustainable, and it will require our leaders across all levels of government to work together to fix this broken system. I raise this issue because it's important to at least acknowledge the elephant in the room. We need property tax reform, which requires both state legislation and changes to the appraisal process that restore balance for overburdened homeowners.

That said, the City is not without blame, too. At a time when our residents' property taxes (and rents) are increasing exponentially, it's more important than ever for the City to mitigate the rising costs of living for existing homeowners and renters. I support (i) reducing the City's reliance on flat-rate fees (such as those on utility bills) which have a disproportionate impact on lower-income and fixed-income families; (ii) establishing a resident-based budget review committee to review the budget, prioritize funding to address needs and prepare longer-term financial goals for the City; (iii) cutting unnecessary expenses from the budget (such as phasing out the Council's recent increases in their own budgets); and (iv) raising the homestead exemption for seniors and persons with disabilities.

DePalma: As Austin grows and changes, we must run toward our housing challenges and not turn away hoping that families will not grow, divorces will not happen, students will not stay, new residents will not come, and our community will not age. With an estimated 135,000 plus in additional housing needed over the next decade, all options must be evaluated. It is important that we create housing that protects and leverages the economic and cultural diversity of this city. We have pushed too many out to live, force them back to the city to work, and then complain about both sprawl and traffic congestion. This is a problem we must fix in every district in the city and it can only be done by a diverse mix of housing types that are built under a clear land development code executed by a functioning development services department.

District 8 lacks the housing diversity needed to address affordability. Our district has a limited stock of multi-family homes and very little in the way of senior focused housing. We have many concerned, aging seniors who fear for their future and ability to remain in their homes, or have a need to downsize into a small, single-story homes of which there is limited supply. Additionally, just like all communities we have families affected by divorce, with parents who wish to keep their children in their schools or seek to hold on to their community support networks. They struggle to find housing that they can afford based on their change of life. Housing is not one size fits all, and we're definitely feeling the housing shortage across the city. We need to increase housing options along Brodie Lane, 290, and 71.

Do you support the Freedom City resolutions recently passed by the Austin City Council? Why or why not?

Levinski: Yes. The first resolution will result in an increased usage of "cite and release" practices, where officers are able to provide citations for non-violent, victimless misdemeanors (instead of arrests). This makes sense from a budgetary perspective, as it avoids the costs of incarcerating individuals for minor crimes and allows our officers to

stay on patrol. The second resolution simply reinforces existing APD practices and policies that pertain to the use of City resources related to immigration enforcement.

DePalma: For those who have been tracking this change in Austin policy, this is understandably controversial, as it follows previous "sanctuary city" reforms which the Federal government deemed illegal. To clarify, this is a resolution, not a law—the intent being to ensure an Austin that feels safe for ALL people including those of color and immigrants who have disproportionately arrested for non-violent offenses at much greater rates. The Freedom City Resolutions require officers 1) questioning immigrants about status to also note that the questions regarding immigration do not need to be answered. And 2) lower the amount of discretionary arrests for minor offenses. While there have been questions on the data used to justify these changes, this resolution is a step towards establishing good faith and accountability between the City, law enforcement, and our community at-large. We are entitled to a safe city and free city, where we all feel comfortable reporting crimes and maintain trust with our officers of the law. I believe that by passing these resolutions we are creating a precedent for those who live here as well as those who choose to move here—that we are ensuring and insist on a city that is safe for all people.

What other priorities do you have for District 8?

Levinski: Two of the most immediate concerns that need to be addressed are fire protection and flooding. Parts of District 8 have the worst fire response times in the City, which is alarming considering how much of our district is at an increased risk of wildfires. Additionally, our district has several areas where flooding is becoming more prevalent. Funding is proposed in the 2018 bond package to address these concerns, and I am hopeful they will pass, so we can begin immediate implementation of their solutions thereafter.

Additionally, I would like to improve the City's coordination and planning with our area school districts. As a council aide, I helped establish the use of "education impact statements" to analyze the impacts that proposed developments and code amendments may have on school enrollments. While this tool has been useful, it's been underutilized, and it will require more proactive leadership to help ensure development and planning decisions fully take into account the impacts on our schools.

DePalma: 1) Reviewing where resources are spent in the city. We need to see which communities are not receiving their fair share of city resources, understand why, and implement a plan to address issues of inequity. I am confident that District 8 is not receiving our fair share of resources. We have families who struggle to find affordable summer camps, seniors who do not have a community center, one city pool, one library, the 2nd highest percentage of poor or failing sidewalks, and not enough fire stations.

2) Addressing public safety needs. I am concerned about the length of time it takes our first responders to serve our community because of the lack of stations and investment into the safety of Southwest Austin. I will also work to fully implement safe routes to schools and provide increased access to traffic calming solutions for our neighborhoods.

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3) Promoting Innovative Land Uses. Creating a policy and implementation plan for the development of multi-use projects ranging from stormwater detention ponds/play fields, underpass skateparks, and Austin Parks and Recreation summer camp programming at neighborhood schools. Land and funding is in short supply and we must leverage both across city departments and regional public agencies. I am already working on these solutions with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department and our Watershed Department.

4) Fixing Robin Hood. The first six months in office I will do something I have not seen done in a meaningful way, and that is to organize, coordinate, and advocate for Austin during the legislative session and special session to fix the education funding formula. Currently, City of Austin property taxpayers pay more to the State of Texas as part of recapture/Robin Hood (22% of your entire property tax) than to the City of Austin which represents 20% of your entire property tax bill. AISD pays more to the State of Texas than any other school district in Texas. Not just more but the second, third, and fourth school districts combined still don't pay what AISD pays. This impacts our schools and our affordability. I am working with a statewide Education PAC out of Houston to address this issue and I recognize it will not be easy but nothing will bring more economic relief to our families than fixing this broken funding formula. I understand the issue and will represent the challenges the broken formula brings to our taxpayers.

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* The Sendera HOA does not endorse any products, services, or goods mentioned in the newsletter.

Sendera Recreation News September 2018

by Sarah Morse

We hope you enjoyed the movie nights at the pool this summer. Can you feel a shift in the seasons yet? Maybe the air is slightly less face-melting? That's fall, y'all. Mark your calendars for the **Sendera Fall Festival, Saturday, October 13th from 6-8 pm.** We will have games for kids and adults, food trucks, costume contest, microbrew tasting, and a Thriller dance party.

In the meantime, would you like to get to know more of your neighbors and promote a safer neighborhood? **Please consider hosting a National Night Out event on Tuesday October 2.**

Here are some details from their website (natw.org):

"National Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods safer, more caring places to live. National Night Out enhances the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement while bringing back a true sense of community. Furthermore, it provides a great opportunity to bring police and neighbors together under positive circumstances."

There will not be one Sendera-wide event, since the goal is for smaller groups like blocks or cul-de-sacs to get together. You could host a block party or a cookout, let kids decorate bikes and scooters and have a small parade, set out your bean bag toss or other yard games, have a dessert pot luck, or request a visit from local emergency personnel like a fire truck. It does not have to be fancy or expensive or time-consuming. Just spend an hour or two that evening getting to know your neighbors.

If this sounds like something you would enjoy, don't wait for someone else to organize it. Now is the time to start planning and publicizing to make it happen on October 2.

NEED HELP? FIND IT ON NEXTDOOR

Are you looking for a reliable babysitter, yard worker, or tutor? The best way to find neighbors for hire is to ask for recommendations on Nextdoor.

Create an account at Nextdoor.com. Then post your inquiry to find neighbors available for hire, or advertise your own services in a quick and easy way. Nextdoor is a **free job listing service** that is always up-to-date and based on community participation.

The Sendera neighborhood has over 75% participation on Nextdoor, so it is the most efficient way for residents to solicit jobs or hire help. Best of all, it's online, so the more people use it, the better connected we can all be.

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IN THE GARDEN

by Pamela Kurburski

It may still be blazing hot, but it really is time to think about fall gardening. If you have a vegetable garden now is the time to be planting cool weather veggies like broccoli, cabbage, and lettuce. Herbs like cilantro, dill, and fennel also go in now.

In the flower beds start thinking about those lovely fall annuals like alyssum, pansies, snapdragons and poppies. I also love lobelia because of its dark blue flowers. Perennials like Fall asters may be planted anytime. Asters put on a great show but just remember they are a one and done plant, blooming spectacularly but only for a short time.

Now is the time to put out wildflower seeds for the spring bloom. Make sure you give them good soil contact and plenty of light. It's also the best time to divide, transplant and share bulbs and rhizomes from daylilies and irises.

Many of us have lost trees over the past few years. Fall is the best time to plant new trees. Make sure you are placing the tree with thought for the size it will be at maturity. Don't plant them too close to your house, sidewalks or drives as the roots can be a problem when the tree reaches out for water and nutrients. Be sure and select varieties that will do well in our alkaline soil and follow the planting instructions. A good guide is the Native and Adapted Landscape Plants published by Texas Agrilife Extension. It's free and available at most nurseries.

Sendera Garden Club meets on the third Wednesday of each month. If you would like to join us, please call me at 512-940-8430 to find out when and where our next meeting will be held.

You're invited



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OVER LUNCH**

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Make The Most Of Your Lunch Hour

WHAT IS LIFE LESSONS?

The goal of Life Lessons is to create a nonthreatening environment that values people and gives them an opportunity to decompress in the middle of the workday. Lunch groups are safe settings that welcome participants to consider issues of finances, faith, family, relationships, and character.

WHO PARTICIPATES IN LIFE LESSONS?

Everyone is welcome. At Life Lessons, co-workers meet over lunch on a regular basis to view relevant, useful messages. Groups are volunteer-driven, nondenominational, and open to everybody. And the best part is that lunch is always free!

WHEN: Ever 2nd & 4th Wednesday From 12 to 1pm

WHERE: Circle C Ranch Community Center

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