

SENDERA

SENDERA HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION

OFFICIAL COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

District 8 Candidates

Q&A

by Alison Carpenter

It's hard to stay engaged in a political climate that is always negative and contentious.

What's nice about the local level—at least in Austin—is how most candidates abstain from the mud-slinging and misinformation. This piece I began in September has been a pleasure because the candidates are so approachable and friendly, and they all share a genuine passion and concern for our city.

In this issue, Paige Ellis and Frank Ward, the two remaining District 8 candidates for city council, answer questions for Sendera constituents.

Answers from Bobby Levinski and Rich DePalma can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/lc28qqxy>



Paige Ellis



Frank Ward & Family

Seven Questions for the Candidates

Why are you seeking election to the city council?

Ellis: I am running because I love my community and I feel a responsibility to my neighbors in District 8, where I have lived for close to a decade. But for too long City Hall has been run by political insiders, and the last thing we need is another politician. City Hall should work for you, not the other way around, and I will make sure that happens.

Ward: For nearly a decade now, my wife, Marion, and I have been very thankful to call Austin home. This is the place where we became parents, where we bought our first home—and then realized we'd outgrown it and needed to make a move to a home that could better accommodate our growing family. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have the opportunity to raise our three young children here.

And yet, as much as we love it here, I'm worried about the direction of our city. The move from our first home to our second home illustrated just how much Austin had changed and how the burden on homeowners had grown substantially over a relatively short period of time.

For many, it is a major struggle to keep up with the rising property taxes; traffic has grown from something people talk about at the water cooler to a near-endless nuisance for commuters across the city; the regulatory burdens for homeowners and business owners continue to needlessly expand; and our First Responders who do so much to defend us are not getting all the care and support they need from our city leadership. I aim to tackle all these challenges on behalf of my fellow citizens in Southwest Austin—and, for that matter, all Austinites.

Briefly describe your qualifications for this position.

Ellis: I am a marketing and public involvement specialist for an environmental consulting group that works on transportation and housing projects. I am uniquely qualified to represent this district because I believe in developing smart transportation options and increasing housing supply with regard to environmental responsibility. I spend my days making sure that our city can accommodate growth

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(Continued from Cover)

while remaining in compliance with the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). I have been involved in my community through volunteer projects with The Texas Book Festival, Keep Austin Beautiful, and as a financial supporter of the Barton Springs Conservancy, the Zilker Botanical Garden, and The Trail Foundation.

Ward: My years serving at all levels of government—federal, state, and local—along with my years in the private sector, most recently, working to grow a small start-up business in Austin into a thriving public affairs firm, has helped me to develop the right blend of experience to take on the work of the people at City Hall. Currently serving as a Commissioner on the City of Austin’s Parks & Recreation Board has provided me with particularly relevant insights about Austin’s needs, which have helped me to better understand our city’s challenges and potential opportunities.

We need a leader at City Hall who will continue the important work that our current City Council Member, Ellen Troxclair, has devoted herself to over the past four years. I am honored to have earned Ellen’s endorsement and full-fledged support. Southwest Austin needs a voice of reason representing us at City Hall—and I am confident that I can ably serve our district and city well.

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

Ellis: Many commuters who come through District 8 Monday-Friday are doing so because they have had to move farther and farther away from Austin. Our roads cannot handle the increase in traffic, and therefore, we need more transit options all across the city. If people have other options, they will not need to commute through District 8. This will alleviate local congestion for our residents—that’s why Austin needs to encourage density where it’s appropriate in the downtown urban core and along transit corridors. This will ensure that people who choose to live in dense, walkable, connected areas of town have the housing stock available to them.

Ward: We cannot address our traffic congestion without investing in our road infrastructure—that includes improvements to existing roads and the development of new roadways. The reality is that most people in District 8 use their cars to get around town. Car lanes and bike lanes serve their purpose, but replacing car lanes with bike and bus lanes is not the answer—we need all three.

We must work closely with TxDOT to ensure that major projects like the new underpasses at MoPac are completed on schedule, and the Oak Hill Parkway moves forward without further delay.

Austin is a city full of smart people; our transportation infrastructure should reflect this and the value of the most efficient technology currently deployed in other smart cities. Adopting new technologies, such as the innovative ideas found in Maria Sotra’s article, “7 Smart City Solutions to Reduce Traffic Congestion” [www.geotab.com/blog/reduce-traffic-congestion], would make a tremendous impact for commuters here in our district and across the city. Three of those solutions are highlighted below:

- Cities can use Geotab’s aggregated data from connected vehicles to automatically identify potholes and other poor road conditions.

The data can be integrated with government management of road infrastructure so that public works or maintenance workers can automate dispatching and work orders.

- Upgrade traffic lights/install ‘smart lights’: By developing a better idea of traffic flow and how long a vehicle idles at stoplights, the city can better modify traffic signal timing with the changes in traffic throughout the day. This will get us moving more quickly and smoothly.

- Synchronize traffic lights in order to keep traffic moving efficiently. That would help to unclog some of the most congested intersections in our district and throughout Austin.

How do you propose to solve the affordability issues facing District 8, particularly for residents on a low or fixed income?

Ellis: My immediate plans would be to bring city services closer to the district— things that our tax dollars already support but are hard for us to get to, such as clinics, after school programs, and senior services. And while I support bringing business to our city, I do not think we should be offering huge tax breaks while the rest of us shoulder the burden—they must pay their fair share. The city also has funding to help those who are homeless, but too often that money is centered around downtown while our greenbelt is where many people experiencing homelessness seek shelter at night. We need to bring those services to the district to help these people and get them off the streets and medians.

My long term plans include making sure that our future housing supply is diverse enough to accommodate young people, senior living, and non-traditional families, and that we explore public transit options to connect Southwest Austin to the rest of our city. Finally, I will be on the lookout for waste, fraud, and abuse and stop it whenever possible.

Ward: Countless families are finding it more and more difficult to afford to live here. This is largely because of the unnecessary tax burden being imposed on us through year-over-year property tax increases that are simply not justified. No one is more affected by this unreasonable spike in affordability than those on low or fixed incomes, as it is now increasingly difficult—if not impossible—for many of our fellow citizens to remain in the city they love and have called home for years.

Reducing the effect of the growing property tax burden by freezing property taxes for a time, then permanently increasing the city’s homestead exemption to 20 percent, boosting the senior property tax exemption, and focusing on responsible spending at the local level will help to provide real relief.


Additionally, we must work to ensure that Austin Energy and Austin Water have reasonable rates and are charging customers accurately. All of these efforts combined will provide residents of the city with much needed relief, and help to refocus City Hall on what can be done to make Austin affordable for all of us—now and in the future.

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

Ellis: I support the Freedom City Resolutions because I believe that transparency is crucial in government, and we need to ensure that laws are being enforced uniformly and that people are not

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treated differently based on race, gender, ethnicity, or national origin. Furthermore, it is important that our men and women in uniform have the appropriate training when addressing immigration, which is a federal duty.

Ward: While the sentiment behind these resolutions is appreciated, we need to rely less on government-imposed regulations, and more on the professionalism and training of our city's superb police officers to do the right thing. We live in one of the three safest big cities in America because of our men and women in uniform who put their lives on the line every day and night to protect us. They need to be properly supported in their work to keep all of us safe.

What other priorities do you have for District 8?

Ellis: In addition to bringing city services closer to home, I intend to run an office that is highly responsive to constituent service requests. Along those lines, I also I think it would be very helpful if Code Compliance officers had a hub to work from in Southwest Austin to respond to calls in a more timely manner. I will continue to advocate for more fire stations in our district, and I will apply my expertise in environmental protection to ensure that new development is done in a manner that is safe and responsible to the surrounding communities.

Ward: [...] We need to focus on core city services. Let's give our police department the tools and resources they need to reduce the high rate of property crime in our district. Let's be good stewards of the parkland and open spaces that help to make Austin Austin. Let's demand transparency from Austin Energy and Austin Water, so that residents have confidence in their bills and also can see whether or not Austin Energy and Austin Water are putting ratepayers' dollars (i.e. our dollars) to good use.

We must plan responsibly for our future growth and work to make certain the financial burden of our growing city isn't unnecessarily shouldered by homeowners who are already struggling to make ends meet.

And, of course, we should conduct a comprehensive audit of the operations of all our city departments and offices to ensure our tax dollars are being utilized in the most efficient and effective manner possible—and if we find that that's not the case, we will correct it.

What is the biggest obstacle hindering progress on District 8 goals?

Ellis: Our single biggest obstacle in District 8 has been our ability to build consensus with other council members. I will build working majorities to get the services we need and help make life a little bit better in Southwest Austin.

Ward: Issues that are not the priority of the vast majority of our citizens regularly seem to command the attention of our current City Council. Instead of making statements on federal policies and devoting time to addressing issues that the city cannot reasonably impact, we must focus on the areas that the people of Austin elect their City Council Members to properly manage, the policies that we can control, and the issues that we as Austin residents care most about. This would be a huge improvement for the residents of District 8 and our friends and fellow citizens across this great city.

In The Garden



Last month I mentioned that fall is the best time to plant trees. Adding a tree to your landscape can be a huge financial investment so you want to do everything you can to ensure the success of the planting. Here are a few things to remember whether you do the planting, or you hire someone to

do it. From personal experience, I prefer someone else do the back-breaking work of digging in our rocky soil. That said, if this is your choice, make sure you hire a reputable arborist and that you observe the work. Some important steps are simple to identify and should be insisted on no matter who is wielding the shovel.

The first and most important step is choosing a tree. Size (both height and spread), light requirements, and potential obstructions (house, driveway, fence) are some things to consider. Of course, you need a tree that will be happy in our alkaline environment. There are lots of websites that can offer suggestions and the Native and Adapted Landscape Plants guide has good information. You can get it free at most nurseries. Once you've decided on the type of tree you want visit a couple of local nurseries to confirm your choice with one of their experts. One note on oaks: choose a white oak over a red oak, if possible. They seem to be a little more resistant to oak wilt. Some varieties to consider are Bur, Monterrey, and Lacey.

Almost as important as the variety is the location. Take into account the ultimate size of the tree. Keep large trees away from your (and you neighbor's) house, driveway and sidewalks.

Now it's time to dig that hole. Ideally, it will be twice as wide as the root ball and deep enough to cover the roots almost to the root flare. This is an important issue. The area where the roots flare out from the trunk should never be covered. Not by soil and not by mulch. Before you plant, make sure the roots are spread out. This is especially important for container grown trees. If you leave roots curled around the tree, it will probably die before its time. Either gently unwind them or just cut them off. Test the drainage in the hole by filling it with water and seeing how long it takes to empty. If its still holding water after a couple of hours, pick another spot.

Finally, it's time to put the tree in its new home. Use the soil you took out of the hole to gradually fill in around the tree to just below the root flare. Make sure the tree is straight. Water it to settle the soil around the roots so it doesn't have to work so hard to get at nutrients. After you water you may need to add more soil.

Step back and admire your (or someone's) handiwork and celebrate that your baby tree is safe and secure. As it slowly grows to maturity, remember that you plant flowers for the present, but you plant trees for the future.

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.

Sendera Recreation Committee News - October 2018

The Sendera Fall Festival is just around the corner! Mark your calendars for Saturday Oct. 13th from 6-8 pm at the park by the pool. There will be carnival style games for kids, prizes, a costume parade, and a Thriller dance party. For adults, we'll have a little tailgate party, so come sample some microbrews and play a round of corn hole. All of that fun stuff is free for residents, but if you want to enjoy the food trucks, bring a few extra bucks. Hope to see you there! -Sarah

Fall Fun for the Kids

3 Carnival Style Games for the Kids (Pumpkins In A Row, Knock Down, Apple Grab) • Fun prizes for each event • Musical Hula-Hoops • Bubble Machine • Costume Parade • Thriller Dance Party

Tailgate Party for the Adults

3-4 Non-Athletic Games for the Adults (Corn Hole, Ladder Ball, Washers) • Residents will compete in teams of two • Prizes for each event • Free Microbrew Tasting • Fun "Medal" Presentations

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Kids' Fall Allergies

By Aaron Williams, Pharmacist

School is in session, and just like clockwork your 8-year-old starts sneezing, sniffing, and snorting—not to mention clearing her throat and blowing her nose like there's no tomorrow. Chances are it's allergies—the immune system's reaction to a substance that would normally be quite harmless. Up to 40% of children in the U.S. have nasal allergies.

Outdoor allergens, also known as hay fever or seasonal allergies often bring images of springtime sufferers. In the fall, however, outdoor allergens such as ragweed and tumbleweed may also release tiny pollen and wreak major havoc—especially in the morning.

But that's not all. In the fall, your child begins spending more time inside at school and friends' homes. That's when many indoor allergens may also rear their ugly heads such as: Dust mites, Mold, Animal allergens, clothing and toys made or stuffed with animal hair or latex in rubber gloves, toys, balloons or elastic in clothing.

You don't have a lot of control over indoor allergens at school. But there certainly are some things you can do to protect your child. Here's a small sample of steps you can take:

- Use air conditioners and keep windows closed in your car and at home and change HVAC filters regularly to reduce exposure to pollen.
- Have your child avoid playing in piles of dead leaves to avoid mold allergies.
- Reduce mold growth in the home by fixing leaky plumbing, removing bathroom carpets and control indoor humidity.
- Vacuum upholstered furniture and wash linens weekly and other bedding every 1 to 2 weeks in hot water.
- Limit stuffed animals in the bedroom.
- Replace pillows every 2 to 3 years.
- Encase pillows, mattresses, and comforters in special covers that keep dust mites out

Avoiding triggers is the best way to prevent the symptoms of allergies. But keep in mind that it can take 3-6 months to see an improvement in symptoms once indoor triggers are removed.

Sometimes avoiding triggers is not enough to control symptoms. Before you stock up on loads of over-the-counter medicine, however, swing by and have a talk with [a pharmacist.] [He/She] can point you to products in the store and guide you on their use. Also, make sure to have a conversation with your child's pediatrician. Sometimes allergy testing or prescription medications are sometimes needed to bring relief.

Nothing herein constitutes medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or is a substitute for professional advice. You should always seek the advice of your physician or other medical professional if you have questions or concerns about a medical condition.

Stage 1 Watering Restrictions in effect

Austin entered into Stage 1 of its Drought Contingency Plan on August 27, thanks to the return of drought, sustained triple-digit heat, and the combined storage level of water in Lakes Travis & Buchanan dropping below 1.4 million acre-feet.

The Stage 1 watering restrictions allow one day per week automatic irrigation between the hours of midnight–8 am or 7 pm–midnight. Check that automatic irrigation systems are programmed correctly to prevent unintentional spikes in water bills and to protect Austin's precious resource.

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