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Gorena set to face off against Gilmore in city council elections

By Heather M. Smith, hsmith@acnpapers.com

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Its déjà vu for Councilmember John Gorena and T.J. Gilmore as they once again face off for Place 4 on the Lewisville City Council.

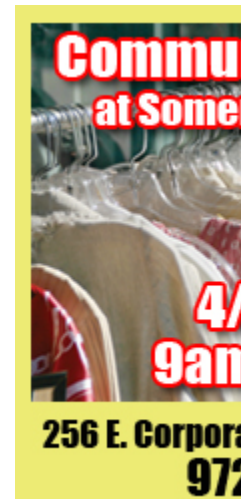
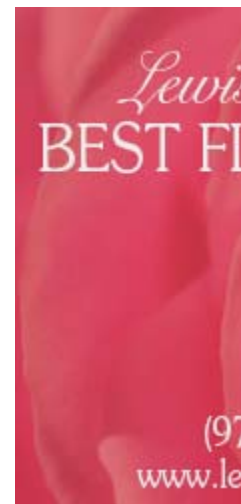
The race culminates on Saturday when residents will cast their vote for the 2010 elections. During the 2009 city council elections, Gorena won the seat by eight votes in a runoff with Gilmore.

"The reason I am running is the same as last year. Having attended city council meetings and workshops for two years before I was elected, I had voiced my concerns, which seemed to not have any affect," Gorena said. "It is my hope to have people on the city council with my same beliefs and values."

Gorena also said the city needs to make decisions differently than in the past. He said he understands how a city works from the inside. Gorena has a Bachelor's degree from the University of North Texas in emergency administration and planning; he is also working toward a Master's degree in public administration.

Gilmore has a Bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona in social science with a minor in business. He also has a background in business sales including 12 years as a Dale Carnegie course instructor. He said his professional career has given him the skills to build a broad consensus and "move ideas forward that won't break the bank."

"I'm running because I believe I bring a fiscally responsible and positive vision of what Lewisville can become," Gilmore said. "Having personally walked over 60 percent of Lewisville this election season to talk with my neighbors, working with neighborhood oil and gas, having lived in cities that have solid tools for enforcing legal workers without creating lawsuits, working with other concerned citizens to have a strong drilling ordinance, and reviewing and recommending community development funds for the past five years have helped make me qualified."





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Oil and gas

Since 2009, the issue oil and gas drilling has become a forefront issue to citizens as the development in the Barnett Shale continues. To that degree, the Lewisville City Council recently voted to hire a consultant to help with the inspections of the sites in Lewisville.

Even though the two candidates have conflicting viewpoints on some issues, both Gorena and Gilmore agree that the oil and gas drilling is a pressing issue facing Lewisville residents.

Gorena's stance is that the U.S. needs to work toward being independent and self-sufficient in regard to oil and gas. However, he said drilling needs to be done safely, or not at all.

"Safety is a high priority and this includes the effects on air, water and land around these drill sites," Gorena said. "I am for monitoring the drilling sites and our ordinances are continually being reviewed and modified to assure the safety for our citizens."

Gilmore supports adopting a "best practices" clause mirrored after Colorado's clause. It strives to reduce emissions to near zero. He also supports fast and easy detection of groundwater contamination.

"I believe we have an obligation to allow our residents to exercise their mineral rights. We must also make sure that once the removal of the oil or gas is complete, that the city isn't left holding the bag for environmental damages and reductions in property values," Gilmore said. "We have stringent regulations on gas stations, we need stringent regulations of gas drilling."

Illegal immigration

Many ideas have been discussed about how Lewisville should handle illegal immigration. Currently, the city utilizes two illegal immigration programs, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agreements of Cooperation in Communities to Enhance Safety and Security (ACCESS) and the Criminal Alien Program (CAP.)

ACCESS teams with state and local law enforcement agencies to combat specific criminal and public safety challenges in communities and ICE identifies criminal aliens incarcerated in U.S. prisons and jails for removal when sentences are complete.

While Gorena supports both programs, he said controlling illegal immigration is everybody's job not just the federal government's.

"I am not saying that somebody needs to do something... I am saying that we need to do something," Gorena said. "Law enforcement is mainly at the local level. We do not have a federal or national police force roaming our streets so who else is supposed to uphold the Rule of Law? We need to take care of our piece of America called Lewisville."

Gorena supports Lewisville's involvement in the 287g program, which allows a state and local law enforcement entity to enter into a partnership with ICE, under a joint Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), in order to receive delegated authority for immigration enforcement within the city's jurisdiction.

"In the last few years the 287g program has been split up into about 15 programs so that communities can pick and choose what they can use to solve this problem," Gorena said. "I think that we should do as many of these programs as we can do. They are different tools to address different parts of the 287g program. The 287g training is needed for officers to be a part of a regional task force to enforce the immigration laws (which I am in favor of)."

Gorena is also concerned about the "humanitarian side" of the issue. He said illegal immigrants are being treated as "second-class" individuals.

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"If we can find ways to enforce the law and punish those who cheat the system by hiring them for "cheap labor", then many of them will go back to their home country," Gorena said. "American citizens will do these jobs for a fair price which is determined by a "fair and level playing field". I am talking about legal capitalism, not savage capitalism."

Gilmore said Lewisville should continue to follow the lead of the police chief and the positive feedback that ICE has given the city regarding the current programs in place.

"Our current utilization of government tools keep the federal government working for us as opposed to having our police working for the federal government," Gilmore said.

According to Gilmore, ICE ACCESS and CAP have removed approximately 1,000 alien criminals since 2007. He is in support of Councilman Lathan Watt's suggestion about city contract language providing real incentives for companies to ensure they follow best practices when hiring to reduce illegal hiring and the economic incentives that attract illegal immigrants to the area.

"We do not have an unlimited budget or unlimited policing resources; responsible leadership is needed to ensure we address these problems without gutting the budget," Gilmore said.

Budget concerns

The economy appears to be making a slow recovery after a few tumultuous years; the U.S. gained 162,000 jobs in March and Texas employers have expanded its employees for five of the previous six months, according to The Economist magazine. However, municipalities still face the challenge of balancing the budget with lower than normal revenue.

The two candidates vying for city council have varying opinions on how to balance the city's budget, while maintaining quality of life.

"We need to stop spending money when we really do not have to spend it," Gorena said.

Gorena said he voted against a motion to take \$390,000 out of the general fund during the August 2009 budget retreat.

"We had just removed \$390,000 for corridor beautification from our budget along with other items to meet a balanced budget on projected income," Gorena said. "Then a motion was made to take that money out of the general fund. I was the only council member to vote no on it. After all, the council had approved about \$750,000 for corridor beautification two years before. I am all for trees and shrubs but when the forecast looks grim, we should be cautious about spending money."

Gorena also said the city should strive to get out of debt. The city is about \$213 million in debt, according to Gorena. (Gorena said he came to that figure by looking at bond debt.) His "get out of debt" plan is to pay off the 2009-2010 bond payment of approximately \$19.1 million, then save \$19 million by using the current city tax rate.

"If we do not get anymore bonds, we will pay off this current bond debt as scheduled in 2032. In the next 22 years, we will be paying about \$54.6 million in interest alone," Gorena said.

Gilmore suggested that the city should examine all recurring bills, such as electricity, software assurance bills, telecommunications bills, storage facilities, waste management and other services in order to see if there are alternatives.

"For example, the city could explore more recycling and in a couple of scenarios actually provide more collection resources for less cost," Gilmore said. "Reviewing a crime prevention district, fire prevention district or even a municipal development district might also allow us to raise funds for specific

uses. The large majority of North Texas cities have enacted these types of programs successfully.”

For information on the candidates visit www.gorena.org and www.tjgilmore.com. Election Day is on Saturday. For a complete list of polling locations visit www.cityoflewisville.com.

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