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## Independent enters Ward 10 race

DYLAN THOMAS / DTHOMAS@SOUTHWESTJOURNAL.COM

MARCH 8, 2017



While he normally identifies with the DFL, Scott Fine is running as an independent in Ward 10. Submitted photo

Scott Fine said no party represents his values as well as the Democrats, and the ECCO resident has been active on and off in the state's DFL party for years. But Fine plans to run for the Ward 10 City Council seat as an independent.

A musician who works as a web developer, Fine said he is out to “challenge the status quo” — even if that means making an end-run around the DFL endorsement process.

“Questions of whether or not that endorsement would be winnable — it would be disingenuous to say those questions didn't arise,” he acknowledged in a recent interview.

That means his campaign against first-term incumbent Lisa Bender has no chance of being derailed at the party's spring convention and could last into the fall. Bender, a leader on biking and transportation policy who also sponsored the neighborhood's successful bid to protect 55 homes in a new historic district, said she intends to be the first council member to win re-election in the ward since the 1990s.

Asked why he felt the ward needed a change, Fine said there was an “alarming need” for more outreach and participation. Describing a “broad-ranging sentiment from a lot of different constituencies,” he said many in Ward 10 felt left out of the process.

“Above all we stand for unity and civil democracy, for decision by consensus and consent rather than successful political maneuvering,” he said.

At the top of his priority list is expanding access to affordable and workforce housing in the ward. He said solutions could include taxing “luxury development” at a higher rate or

“I think we need to start imagining ourselves what we want to build and putting that forward in public-private partnerships and getting those things built,” he said.

On his campaign's Facebook page, Fine writes that “luxury-priced developer driven density” is changing the character of Ward 10 neighborhoods “with little regard for the clear opposition of local residents (and) small businesses.”

Bender said she feels good about her track record on development, which has been a hot-button topic in the ward. She said she has been working to guide “appropriately scaled development” to the areas where the community wants it, based on previously approved city policies and neighborhood small area plans.

“I’ll say this: I care a lot more about the people than the buildings. And people need a place to live,” she said. “If we don’t provide the housing people need, our neighbors are going to be displaced.”

Among Fine’s other top priorities is protecting and enhancing the city’s status as a so-called “sanctuary city” that welcomes immigrants and refugees. He said he would also work for property tax relief, possibly by reexamining the structure of the city’s tax system.

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**Joshua** • 3 years ago

Scott is a responsive and thoughtfully engaged person. As a resident born and raised in the immediate area, I feel he would be an exemplary public servant, representing and balancing the needs of Ward 10 residents with the larger issues around politics, economic accessibility and development needs.

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