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Reflecting the Concerns of the Community

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## Incumbent McKeown Runs Hard To Keep Seat



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Mirror staff writer

Endorsed by the political powerhouse, Santa Monicans for Renters' Rights (SMRR), and armed with robust financial backing from Santa Monica residents and organizations, Mayor pro tem Kevin McKeown should have little problem winning a second term on the Santa Monica City Council in the November 5 election, say political insiders.

According to McKeown, he will report more than \$20,000 in contributions in his next campaign disclosure statement. His principal financial backing comes from SMRR, which as of the beginning of September, had nearly \$80,000 to spend on the current campaign.



Monday, May 6, 2013



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\$80,000 to spend on the current campaign.

In addition to SMRR, the Living Wage Coalition, Santa Monica-Malibu Classroom Teachers' Association, Santa Monica Police Officers' Association, Santa Monica Firefighters' Association, the Sierra Club, Westside Greens, Coalition to Protect the Living Wage, Southern California Americans for Democratic Action and Los Angeles League of Conservation Voters have all endorsed McKeown.

Even so, he says that running for City Council is never easy.

"In some ways running for City Council will be harder this time. Besides having a full-time job I am also a sitting Council member and take those responsibilities seriously. I spend 60 hours a week being a Council member; that makes time management challenging," McKeown said in a phone interview this week.

Growing up in New York City, McKeown went to parochial school. His father died when he was 12, and he and his mother moved to Connecticut where he attended public high school, graduating two years early. After two years of boarding school, he headed off to Yale University.

In 1976, McKeown moved into the Santa Monica apartment in which he still resides. He took a job as the general manager of KROQ, a progressive radio station. But when the station switched to a standard rock format, McKeown departed.

Today, he works as a Macintosh computer and networking consultant for the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, upgrading computer systems in classrooms and working with teachers, each of whom now has an email account, and students, who have access to classroom computers and computer labs.

He's an ardent supporter of increased school funding. When the City suffered its first budget shortfall in a decade this year, it hit close-to-

home for McKeown as the School District, simultaneously hit by its own budget problems, struggled to cut costs, and turned to the City for help.

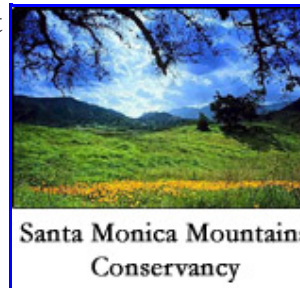
"Our district has already been affected by the sad lack of state funding," he said. "Fortunately, the City and people of Santa Monica have understood the importance of education and have historically given our schools additional support. I am proud of the City Council's continuing support for our kids and our schools and I don't see that changing at all."

Before running for City Council, McKeown did



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a lengthy stint as a political activist in Santa Monica He marched against a hotel proposed for the 415 PCH site in Santa Monica -- the old Sand and Sea Club/Marion Davies estate -- and for Proposition S, which banned further hotel development on the beach.

He went on to join and later become chair of the Wilshire/Montana Neighborhood Association and helped found the North of Montana Association. He became involved with the SMRR steering committee and was appointed to the Santa Monica Telecommunications Group.

Yet, making the step from activist to City Councilmember is a hard one.

“There is a challenging transition from being an activist to being a Council member. As an activist, one can be single-minded on an issue; as a Council member I listen carefully to everyone and try my best to balance everyone’s points of view for the whole community benefit,” he said.

With a number of contentious political issues on the November 5 ballot, as well as before the City Council, McKeown has been highly visible, fighting for hotel workers’ rights, the living wage ordinance, and against “monster mansions.”

“I am working for the quality of life for Santa Monica residents. Santa Monica was being overwhelmed by chaotic changes that threatened to destroy the character, the livability, and affordability of our neighborhoods and even our commercial zone,” he said and added, “We have created new zoning that disallowed monster mansions from being built, and we are now working on changing the zoning in Sunset Park

and other areas of the City where over-sized houses are being put in.”

McKeown has been an outspoken advocate of the living wage ordinance, which, if passed, would require any businesses grossing over \$5 million in the coastal zone or downtown core to pay employees \$10.50 an hour with healthcare benefits or \$12.25 per hour without healthcare benefits. Under the ordinance, some businesses could apply for and be granted exemptions.

“I am a strong supporter of the Living Wage to help workers lift their families out of poverty. I helped write the law and made sure there were exemptions for struggling companies and youth employment,” he said.

McKeown opposes the VERITAS measure, which would elect Council members by district, calls for direct election of the mayor and gives the mayor veto power, and sets term limits for Council members. He is an advocate of several

COUNCIL MEMBERS. He is an advocate of several measures aimed at providing more low-income housing, and giving more rights to residents of rent-controlled apartments.

Though he is generally seen as a front-runner in the Council race, incumbent McKeown is running hard. But taking time out of his schedule, on Sunday, October 6, he was one of the speakers at a big peace rally, "Not in Our Name," at the Federal Building in Westwood.

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