



Web Posted: 10/27/2008 12:00 CDT

## Appointed councilman still debating run for District 9

By Greg Jefferson - Express-News

City Councilman Louis Rowe is struggling over whether to run next year for the District 9 seat he's held since replacing Kevin Wolff as an interim appointee in January.

He made that clear during a fundraiser in September when he stood up and addressed a group of potential donors.

"I told them maybe they should keep their checks until I'd made a decision," Rowe said, though adding that he still collected as much as \$10,000 in contributions.

While he's deciding, business-woman Elisa Chan is moving ahead. The co-owner of Unintech Consulting Engineers has been raising money and lining up support for her campaign for the North Side seat. And Weston Martinez, a manager of AT&T's engineering design department who unsuccessfully vied with Wolff for the office in 2005, is picking up where he left off.

Rowe said he's struck a workable balance between his council work, business and family life. He's unsure whether a political campaign would prove to be too much.

But a big part of what Rowe's wrestling with is the fact that Wolff made clear — as he prepared to step down late last year — that he wanted his replacement to serve out the remaining 18 months of his second term without seeking election in 2009. The aim was to avoid giving the appointee a leg up on other contenders when the seat came open.

Wolff resigned in December to run for the Precinct 3 seat on Commissioners Court. He's now locked in a closely watched contest against Democrat Chip Haass, also a former councilman, on the North Side.

In front of a panel of District 9 civic and business leaders that Wolff pulled together to vet candidates in December, Rowe recalled saying he couldn't commit to not running. But he also said part of the decision would depend on Wolff's blessing.

"I said, 'Kevin, I'll let you decide if I run or not,'" noted Rowe, the 59-year-old president and CEO of Goetting & Associates, a mechanical and electrical engineering firm.

But in a meeting with Rowe last week, Wolff said he told his replacement, "Louis, I can't make that decision for you."

Wolff, for his part, contends Rowe had committed privately not to campaign for the seat next year.

"I like the guy a lot," he said, "but I expect everybody to live up to their commitments."

Martinez sought the interim appointment, but said he knew he wouldn't get it because of his plans to run for the office in 2009. "Everybody involved in politics in San Antonio was aware that was part of the criteria," he said.

Chan, 42, a former city planning commissioner and current vice chair of the Texas Federation of Asian American Chambers of Commerce, considered pursuing the interim post, but decided against it because of the commitment not to run that Wolff pressed.

"I didn't want to put myself in a compromised position," she said.

Instead, she began piecing together a campaign last spring.

"I have always been very active in community service, and I see this as an opportunity," Chan said. "I consider this an open seat."

Chan raised \$23,845 in June, according to a campaign finance report filed July 15, and she says she brought in another \$25,000 from a Sept. 30 fundraiser at the Club at Sonterra.

The invitation to the event was signed by heavy hitters: former AT&T Chairman and CEO Ed Whitacre; DFB Pharmaceuticals President John W. Feik; Michael Beldon, a contractor and campaign treasurer for Mayor Phil Hardberger and mayoral aspirant Julian Castro; and Kausi Subramaniam, president of the Alamo Asian American Chamber of Commerce.

In all, Chan said she's looking to raise about \$100,000, and will probably lend \$50,000 to her campaign.

Unitech, a civil engineering firm where she serves as president and oversees business development, currently holds three contracts with the city valued at a total of \$1.1 million, according to the city's Capital Improvement Management Services. Department officials found no contracts with Rowe's company.

Chan said her company stopped seeking city work in May, when she decided to run for the seat, and wouldn't do so if she won election. Before winning the interim appointment, Rowe likewise pledged not to seek city contracts while on the council.

Nearly four years ago, Martinez, 32, ran an underfunded, shoe-leather campaign against Wolff, winning about 30 percent of the vote. He said the effort helped raise his profile in the district.

"We've proved we can work hard. Now we have to prove we can work smart," said Martinez, a local organizer for Mike Huckabee's bid for the GOP presidential nomination last winter. "Our support will be broad-based, and we will have business support."

**Find this article at:**

[http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/Appointed\\_councilman\\_still\\_debating\\_run\\_for\\_District\\_9\\_seat.html](http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/Appointed_councilman_still_debating_run_for_District_9_seat.html)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.