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Cibrian, Chan make their bids official

By **Edmond Ortiz** - Editor/North Central News

San Antonio City Council races heated up last weekend as Diane Cibrian formally joined the mayoral race and Stone Oak resident Elisa Chan began her bid to become the city's first Asian-American councilwoman.

After months of speculation, Cibrian – who won an election run-off for the District 8 seat in 2007 – announced her candidacy Sunday at the base of the Tower of the Americas.

Introduced by her 12-year-old daughter, Cristina, the councilwoman said she is the one mayoral candidate with the leadership skills and experience needed to lead the city.

“The most important issue facing our city is moving our economy forward. We must retain and expand existing businesses,” Cibrian told a crowd of more than 100 people. “We must grow our small business sector and make it easier to do business with the city. As mayor, I will position our city to lead this country in attracting new business, creating good jobs for hard-working families.”

Extending a platform developed during her 2007 council campaign, Cibrian said she would focus on economic issues, pledging to improving the local workforce, cutting property taxes, eliminating what she called “wasteful spending” and advocating property appraisal reform.

Cibrian outlined other parts of her mayoral campaign platform, including continuing to expand public safety elements, relieving traffic congestion, protecting the environment, ensuring the city's military missions and securing a long-term water source.

Cibrian cited her past two years' worth of council work as major factors in running for mayor. She pointed especially toward helping to achieve a two-year balanced budget, adding more emergency personnel, chairing the Camp Bullis Joint Land Use Study and helping the city earn a “Solar City” designation from the federal government, which was due to renewable energy initiatives.

“We need a strong mayor, someone who knows the ins and outs behind the doors of City Hall, said Mike Novak, a former Bexar County commissioner who spoke to support Cibrian. “You'll have a mayor who has a vision, who understands that job creation is the key to improving the quality of life.”

Cibrian's campaign is touting business community support from notable dignitaries such as Ernesto Ancira, Red McCombs, Marty Wender and Bill Sinkin. Cibrian's opponents thus far include councilman and 2005 mayoral runner-up Julian Castro, and businesswoman Trish DeBerry-Mejia. More information on Cibrian's mayoral campaign can be found at www.votediane.com.

Chan spoke to more than 50 people Saturday at Walker Ranch Park about her campaign for the District 9 seat, to which current Councilman Louis Rowe said he would not seek election for a full term.

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Having arrived in the United States in 1988 and achieved citizenship in 1999, Chan has quickly built a successful reputation in the local business community.

President of Unintech Consulting Engineers, a company she founded with her husband Clifford, Chan promised to emphasize commercial development in her campaign.

“As a small business owner running day-to-day operations, I truly understand how important fiscally conservative business values and practices are,” Chan said told a crowd that included Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff. His wife Tracy is the campaign treasurer. “My goal as your new council member will be to apply my business, analytical and organizational expertise to city government.”

Chan said she would work to improve the city's infrastructure by helping to prioritize short-term and long-term projects, keep taxes low, retain existing local businesses, expand global commercial efforts and bolster public safety.

Chan added she hopes to balance police, fire and EMS coverage across sprawling District 9. She also seeks to focus on ways to reduce violent crime and property crime in her district.

Although this is Chan's first attempt at public office, she has been active with several business and civic groups, such as the North San Antonio Chamber of Commerce and Stone Oak Property Owners Association Advisory Committee.

Resident Jane Fritz, who said she mulled seeking this council seat, said Chan possesses the talent to do well in representing District 9.

“Honesty and integrity are top traits. Leadership is action, not just a position,” she added.

Chan thus far looks to face a challenge from Weston Martinez, who previously ran for the District 9 post. More information on Chan's campaign can be found at www.voteelisachan.com.

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