

MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2008

New Candidates on the Local Scene



It is always encouraging to see younger citizens involved in public affairs and believing that they can make a difference. Some appear to be dedicated to changing their community for the better, and some seem to be dedicated to advancing their own ambitions. In that way, they are not unlike older politicians, some of whom have the heart of a servant and some of whom are self-serving egoists.

Josh Jenkins is one of the good guys coming onto the local political scene. He has been actively following city affairs for several years, and he formerly operated the *Springdale Votes* blog for more than a year. He will announce this evening as a candidate for the Springdale City Council. Judging by his past public comments and positions, he would likely be an alderman in the progressive tradition of **Kathy Jaycox** and **Jesse Core** and a significant improvement over incumbent **Jeff Watson**.

Watson has been the advocate of the status quo in Chickendale. He has voted against adding code enforcement officers, against the proposed billboard moratorium, against the proposed sign ordinance, and against the city's landlord registration ordinance to help protect tenants from irresponsible landlords, yet gladly votes to give \$170,000 a year of taxpayer money to the Springdale Chamber of Commerce, a private organization, with absolutely no accountability to taxpayers for how the money is spent.

On his website, Jenkins says, "The political machine, the same old thing, isn't working. It's time for a New Day in Springdale, and I'm asking for your support and for your vote." He deserves praise for his motivation and due consideration by the voters.

In Fayetteville, a young fellow named **Matthew Petty** has also announced for alderman. He describes himself as a "social entrepreneur" who has lived here since 2002 and only recently moved to Ward 2. He talks about people as "stakeholders," and he has a new website promoting himself and his candidacy.

Petty goes on about how much he supports sustainability, as if any local candidates reject the idea. Unlike Josh Jenkins, young Petty has decided to run against one of Fayetteville's most progressive and popular political leaders, Alderman **Nancy Allen**. He appears to be intelligent but not very wise, and we can only hope that his ambition doesn't lead him to burn so many bridges that any future contributions to public dialog are ignored. Some attribute his political quest to self-centered hubris that needs to be fed by public attention instead of any legitimate argument for change. Others have suggested that he was put up to this fool's errand by **Dan Coody** to run against Allen, who called him out on the \$63 million cost overrun on the sewer system. Coody apologized for throwing a public fit, but, if he is behind this little stunt, it would call into question his sincerity.

Nancy Allen was elected by over 70% against a more sincere and more experienced candidate than Petty. He will get a real political education in November.