

Frank Sweeney

Frank Sweeney is the only incumbent seeking re-election to City Council, and says he’s running because he has “more to give.”

“My overall concept is that I want to make sure Whitefish stays livable for the residents of Whitefish and for those that want to come and live in Whitefish,” he said. “I want people who want to join what Whitefish is — we’re not going to become some place else.”

In 2009, Sweeney was appointed to fill an empty seat on Council and was later elected to Council in 2011, serving ever since.

He is a graduate of Southern Methodist University in Dallas, and has a law degree from the University of Houston. He worked as a lawyer for Pepsi Co. for more than 15 years before coming to Whitefish in 1998. Sweeney says the city is facing some issues that his experience on Council will be of assistance in dealing with — reauthorization of the resort tax and how funds from that should be directed in the future, the potential creation of a new tax increment finance district, and what the city does with funds that will go into the city’s general fund when the current TIF district sunsets next year.

He notes that handling of funds from the resort tax and TIF can be a way to assist the city in paying for infrastructure needs and it should be a priority for some of the funds to go to the construction of the city’s new wastewater treatment plant.

“It will be incumbent upon the city to think through these issues,” he said. “We could just give it all back to the tax payers, but then we won’t be in a position to pay for the capital improvement projects that we need to fund without raising taxes. Some of those funds need to go to infrastructure projects on a

long-term basis.”

Creating affordable housing in Whitefish still needs work, says Sweeney, but Whitefish is leading the

way with its inclusionary zoning program that requires all new residential development to include 20% deed-restricted affordable housing “We’re to some degree taking a leap of faith and we just have to stay with it to find out if it’s working and if it needs to be changed,” he said. “One of the issues remaining is the fear that for some neighborhoods the affordable housing will unreasonably increase density in those traditional neighborhoods. That’s going to remain an area we need to pay attention to, and we may need to add some fixes.”

Sweeney says if the city finds that the program isn’t working it will need to keep changing the program so that it creates affordable housing.

Growth

Sweeney says the growth that’s been happening in Whitefish is tough on the 7,000 residents here who are supporting infrastructure that has to support 20,000 to 30,000 visitors in the summer. He says he’s positive about the city’s work to create a sustainable tourism management plan as a way to deal with future growth.

“Growth is killing us right now,” Sweeney said. “We don’t want to stop the growth, but we also need to figure out how we maintain sustainable tourism.”

Sweeney says the city is behind in dealing with the growth, and much of the growth that has occurred doesn’t serve the citizens of Whitefish, but rather the visitors who come here.

“We’re in one of those



Affordable housing