

November Elections | City Clerk Evelyn Zneimer Running for City Council

Civic leader community volunteer and public servant with vast experience is seeking her first term in office. Her campaign message: "A voice for change. A commitment to neighborhoods, and a return to fiscal responsibility, transparency and accountability."

By **Bill Glazier** - June 19, 2020



PHOTO: Eric Fabbro | SouthPasadenan.com News | 4th of July Parade, Festival of Balloons 2019. South Pasadena City Clerk – Evelyn G. Zneimer in a 1930 Model A Cabriolet – Owner/Driver Ken Mallory

Evelyn Zneimer says she wants to “restore trust in City Hall” as a major reason why she is seeking a seat on the South Pasadena City Council.

Zneimer has announced her candidacy in the First District and will run against Mayor Robert Joe in November if he decides to seek re-election. A lawyer and Judge Pro Tem in the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Zneimer has served as South Pasadena City Clerk for seven years.

She holds transparency in high regard, saying it has diminished at the local government level, and will push for change. “In the last three years, there have been a number of issues decided behind closed doors without any explanations to the public,” explained Zneimer. “For example, the city spent over half a million dollars on consultant Kaizer Rangwala for the purpose of updating and completing our general plan. Without notice to the public, Rangwala vanished and replaced by Placeworks. The city was willing to spend another quarter of a million dollars outside of the original budget to restart the previous process

already begun by Rangwala. What happened to our general plan process? What was the process for hiring Placeworks?"

Her biggest issue is what she calls "the city's lack of transparency, lack of accountability, and deficient or misleading communication. In addition, there are specific issues related to transportation/mobility/and the 710. I'm concerned about the economic security of our City in light of COVID-19 pandemic. I'm concerned with the alarming turnover of city staff in the last three years. We've lost multiple department heads and staff at all levels. We are constantly losing continuity, institutional and local knowledge, which makes it harder for us to move forward as a city."

Another major concern affecting the trust of the community, explained Zneimer, is the handling of the recently presented budget, which she describes as "flawed," noting: "It took an outside former finance director (Josh Betta) to alert City Council and finance commission that the budget had about \$14 million in discrepancies out of the \$55 million city budget."

Zneimer stressed she wants to "help lead a city to serve its residents and can be trusted, adding: "The residents have the right to be informed. City Hall and the City Council have left us with many unanswered questions. At times, they have chosen to chastise members of the public for seeking those answers leaving us void of leadership and trust."

On Thursday, the South Pasadena Finance Commission voted to recommend the City Council delay adoption of its proposed \$45 million 2020-2021 budget pending receipt of its overdue annual audit. The budget comes before the City Council June 24 and will weigh the Commission's recommendation.

"It was a member of the public that brought our budget issues to light and alerted the residents to issues," said Zneimer. "A recent response from the city informs us that they knew but did not let the public know or disclose this information. When staff knew, it should have reported that out to our finance commission and it should have been discussed as we try to adopt this current budget. We are left wondering what happened since 2017 to the present time? The frequency of Public Record Requests (PRR) in our city is telling that the residents want answers. However, City Council blames the public for burdening city on countless PRRs. When the Public Records Act was signed into law, this allowed the public to access materials to monitor proper functioning of its government. The stifling of information by the City Hall is staggering. The City of South Pasadena and those who were elected to represent the people have an obligation to uphold the constitutional rights of the people."

Zneimer would come to the council with ample experience after serving a total of 14 years with the Natural Resources Commission and Parks & Recreation Commission. In addition, she has held various ad hoc committee roles, including the Utility Users Tax (UUT) Committee. She's also been active with the San Gabriel Valley Leadership Council for the American Cancer Society, South Pasadena Educational Foundation (SPEF), South Pasadena Chinese American Club (SPCC), South Pasadena Preservation Foundation and South Pasadena Woman's Club.

Over the years, Zneimer has participated in “626 Golden Streets” events, in which roadways were open, in an effort to support public health, walkability in the city, and safety for the pedestrians and bicyclists.

“I have been involved in South Pasadena government for thirty years as a commissioner, a volunteer in community organizations and the elected City Clerk,” she said. “I understand and respect the community, and have seen the good and the bad in city government for decades. I can effect change because of the depth of my experience, and because of my professional experience as a lawyer and Judge Pro Tem. I know how to navigate complex issues, contracts and disagreement. I also understand the importance of being a team player and working with the community to effect change. I want to foster involvement and bring the community back into the conversation. As an example, I’m looking to work with our Youth Reformers, who are our future leaders, to effect change and address issues of systemic racism. I strongly believe that it will take our collective whole to effect significant changes in our city as we evolve and face the challenges of the present and the future.”

Asked about the city’s strengths and weaknesses and how she can make a difference, Zneimer is anxious to tackle the issues head on.

“The strengths of the city are the strong community spirit and how various neighborhoods and community groups rally together to help one another such as volunteering to make a safer community,” she offered. “An inclusive community with participation by its residents is the core strength of our city that is supported by our front-line staff, like our librarians, our fire fighters, senior center staff and community services who know the community and care about it. Our current weaknesses are a lack of direction, the inability to align priorities with the community’s will and a general lack of transparency. These are top down issues. Because of these issues, a wall has been created between the community and its government.”

Her platform is to implement fiscal responsibility, transparency and accountability of the government to the people it serves “I would like to preserve our smalltown and unique character, healthy activities such as bicycling, walking and community sports with mindfulness to climate change and preservation of our open spaces and urban forests,” said the longtime resident. “I want to improve the livability for my fellow residents in District 1 as well as the City at large.”

Zneimer lives in the Monterey Hills with her two children, who attended South Pasadena public schools. “Our mother, Evelyn Zneimer, spent more than 30 years volunteering for South Pasadena, serving in various commissions and committees to keep South Pasadena and its neighborhoods a safe and beautiful place to live,” pointed out her son, Samuel.

A reformer for City Council, Zneimer hopes her campaign message resonates with others, enough to put her in office: “A voice for change. A commitment to neighborhoods, and a return to fiscal responsibility, transparency and accountability.”



PHOTO: City of South Pasadena | SouthPasadenan.com News
| Evelyn Zneimer, current City Clerk for South Pasadena

“I love South Pasadena and will work tirelessly with our community members to bring about change and restore trust,” she said “I have invested in my community by serving as a commissioner, elected official and volunteer. Like most South Pasadenans, I want the best for our community. With my professional experience, community experience and government experience, I can offer good leadership and teamwork, which our city sorely lack at the moment.”

Bill Glazier

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Bill Glazier is a South Pasadenan and has been the primary news reporter & editor-in-chief for South Pasadena for over 24 years. His work with SouthPasadenan.com is read by over 110,500 people in the South Pasadena/Pasadena Metro, Highland Park, and surrounding communities.

