

HELOTES CITY COUNCIL

Developer funds trio of challengers

Hopefuls trying to oust incumbents share a total of \$10,000.

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HELOTES — The amount of money contributed this year to municipal election campaigns here is markedly higher than in previous years, due in part to \$10,000 in contributions made by an area developer.

On March 19, Alfred "Tom" Rohde gave a total of \$10,000 to three candidates who are running against three City Council incumbents. Tom Schoolcraft is challenging Mayor Jon Allan, Jeff Ellis is running against Place 3 Councilwoman Linda Boyer-Owens and Rich Whitehead is seeking to unseat Place 5 Councilman Stuart Birnbaum.

Rohde contributed \$4,000 to Schoolcraft's campaign and gave \$3,000 each to Ellis and Whitehead. Their most recent contribution reports indicate Schoolcraft received a total of \$5,460.28, while Ellis and Whitehead each received a total of \$3,355.14.

"I felt it was time for a change," Rohde said when asked about his contributions. He added he won't contribute any more money to the races.

Unlike San Antonio, Helotes does not have ordinances governing the amount of money

that can be contributed.

"I have looked at records, (and) numbers like this are unheard of," Allan said. "In past elections, (Helotes) candidates have usually not received more than \$1,000, total."

As of April 2, Allan and Birnbaum each had received a total of \$2,727.11 and Boyer-Owens had \$3,221.48.

Schoolcraft said he only met Rohde once.

"He has no interest in our campaign, and I decided not to discriminate as to who I accept money from," he added.

Ellis and Whitehead said they think Rohde contributed because he wants fair government.

"You're either 'team green' or 'team red.' There is no other position to be in," Whitehead said, referring to the incumbents' green campaign signs and the challengers' red ones. "It is obvious it is a head-to-head battle of two sides, and there is no middle. Rohde must agree with us, but no favoritism will ever be shown."

Allan said he's running to keep control of Helotes in the hands of residents, not developers.

"I am tired of this business about trying to buy candidates and bankrolling their campaigns," he said. "It is obvious what is happening."

About two years ago, Rohde received approval from the city to develop a business park

on property off Leslie Road, but it was never built. Rohde said he does not own the tract but has an interest in it.

The next round of campaign finance reports is due Friday.

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