

LOCAL

Johnson announces candidacy, cites legislative record

By Curtis Wackerle

Aspen Daily News Staff Writer

Incumbent City Councilman Jack Johnson has officially declared his candidacy for re-election.

Johnson issued a press release Wednesday highlighting his love for the Aspen community and his work on the council. Johnson, 45, plans to run on his record. Johnson has served four years on council. He has worked in a kitchen design studio and now has a "very, very small" business knitting teddy bears.

Specifically on his record, Johnson cites supporting a deed-restricted "affordable" restaurant as part of the Cooper Street Pier lawsuit settlement; a downtown moratorium intended to keep the Red Onion and businesses like it from switching to high-end retail; and a public-private partnership where a private commercial group leveraged city resources to keep the Isis movie theater running as such.

Johnson also cited hallmarks from his time on council that are more controversial: The city's \$35 million in affordable housing land-banking purchases and historic preservation efforts which have sought to clamp down on the demolition and alteration of buildings built in the 1950s through 1970s.

"I am proud of encouraging purchases of land on which to build more affordable housing — especially in-town housing. I have worked hard on historical preservation issues that were both strong and fair," Johnson wrote. His pride extends to the BMC lumberyard purchase for \$18 million, he said.

"We are looking 20 to 30 years out," Johnson said of the council's land-banking decisions. "It will look inexpensive then."



JOHNSON

Citing the voters' willingness to extend the real estate transfer tax for affordable housing by another 30 years in last November's election, Johnson said citizens want the council to be aggressive on the housing front.

"It shows you the degree to which the program is supported in this town," Johnson said. "Our responsibility is to take that seriously and actually do something about it."

On historic preservation, Johnson said he has no regrets about bringing forward Ordinance 30 in the summer of 2007, shortly after the election of Mayor Mick Ireland. Ordinance 30 required a mandatory historic review of any property more than 30 years old that sought a demolition application. Some property owners howled in protest, and the council backtracked, making the demolition review apply only to a list of properties and removing the council's ability to initiate non-voluntary historic designation proceedings on those properties.

"I wouldn't have [backtracked] if I had been dictator," Johnson said, adding that the backtracking was spurred by a "vocal minority." The Ordinance 30 rules were bet-

ter than what was in place before because they applied to all properties 30 years old or older, and made demolition of early ski-era history more difficult, he said.

"It's fundamentally unfair to say history ended in the mining era," Johnson said, pointing to community support for historic preservation.

Johnson's press release doesn't once mention the word "civility," which has become a buzz word for many council and mayoral challengers who submit that Aspen's political process has become less civil over the last two years.

"I am civil," he said. "I'm not going to allow someone else to determine for me whether someone else has been civil."

Johnson also pointed to an anonymously distributed bumper sticker that reads, "Get JACK OFF City Council."

"Am I supposed to take that as the first gesture in a civil campaign?" he said.

"If people don't like what I have to say, it doesn't mean I have been uncivil," Johnson said. "It just means we disagree."

curtis@aspendailynews.com