

Council District 1 race

Candidates face-off at PQ forum

By **Steve Dreyer**

The three candidates campaigning to represent District 1 on the City Council agree on the need to fire protection efforts but disagree on whether the city should contract out for some services and whether the "strong mayor" form of government is working in San Diego.

Phil Thalheimer and Marshall Merrifield say they support the outsourcing of some jobs, with Merrifield calling the idea a "monstrous economic opportunity" for the city.

Sherri Lightner says she opposes the idea, claiming that it moves away from the concept of city employees being accountable and that "we don't need another layer of accountability."

The comments were made at an April 3 candidates forum at the Doubletree Golf Resort sponsored by the Rancho Penasquitos Town Council and the Rancho Bernardo Community Council.

Outside the ballroom, union



MERRIFIELD

members were holding signs in opposition to the city outsourcing jobs to the private sector.

As to the strong mayor form of government, Merrifield said he was pleased with what he'd seen so far,

Thalheimer advocated adding a ninth council seat to increase the number of votes needed to overturn a mayor's decision, while Lightner said she would like to see the council "push back a little more."

All three candidates said the city is not doing enough to protect residents from another wildfire.



THALHEIMER

Lightner said she wanted more emphasis placed on brush management and building codes and wants to see more fire stations built.

Thalheimer, also an advocate of more stations, said the city should work more closely with the county to prevent and contain fires that typically start in the

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LIGHTNER

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eastern, unincorporated portion of the county, then move westward into the city.

Merrifield said he supports buying more fire trucks and helicopters and wants migrant encampments cleared out as they represent fire hazards.

The three candidates were unanimous in their opposition to any attempt to have San Diego designated as a safe harbor for undocumented aliens. They were also in agreement that the Black Mountain Ranch area, which includes Del Sur and Santaluz, should have its own planning group. The area is currently overseen by the Rancho Penasquitos Planning Board.

District 1 has been represented for nearly eight years by Scott Peters, who is termed out. The mostly coastal district stretches inland to include Rancho Penasquitos, Del Sur and Santaluz.

Lightner, 57, lives in La Jolla and is a co-owner, with her husband, of a consulting engineering business. She has served on the La Jolla Community Planning Association, the La Jolla Town Council, La Jolla Shores Association and a handful of other community groups.

Merrifield, 48, lives in Carmel Valley. He is CEO of General Lock, is a former municipal finance expert on Wall Street and has started several high-tech companies. He manages an \$8 million YMCA camp endowment, served on the Magdalena Ecke YMCA board and founded Playground Partners.

Thalheimer, 50, is a former Rancho Penasquitos resident who moved to Torrey Hills one year ago. He is the founder and CEO of a flight school, has worked for the San Diego Data Processing Corp. and is chairman of San Diegans for the Mount Soledad National Memorial. He serves on the Rancho Family YMCA board and is a former member of the Rancho Penasquitos Town Council and Planning Board.

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