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Editorial on Open Seat Elections – Published May 18, 2005

I support the initiative for open seat elections in the City of Sun Valley because it is good for the citizens of the community, as it allows for elections that are more issues oriented rather than about specific individuals or personalities. In open seat elections, candidates run FOR one of two available seats on City Council rather than AGAINST a specific candidate.

Open seat elections also give the voters a broader choice in whom they elect to office, by allowing them to vote from among a field of all the candidates.

This is a very small community and those benefits certainly outweigh any problems that some larger cities have when numerous council seats are up for election at one time. In Sun Valley only two seats are up during any given election. Designated seat elections make sense in large urban cities where demographic and geographic reasons for representation exist. No such designations exist in our small community as all elected Councilpersons represent all citizens; thus, there is no reason for specified seats.

Campaigns that focus on issues, instead of just personalities, truly benefit our citizens. The leaders of Sun Valley will be facing many important decisions in the coming years that will affect the City's future character and viability. Those issues will be on the minds of the voters and that's where the campaigns should be focused, with all candidates explaining where they stand and how they will be able to accomplish their goals.

Thus, I find it hard to see any logic for continuing the current experiment of designated seats in our community, since there are clearly no direct benefits to the voters. It simply reduces their choices and moves campaigns away from the issues. After all, elections should be for the benefit of the voters, not just the incumbents.

I urge you to vote in favor of ending election of Council members by seat designation in the Sun Valley Special Initiative Election on Tuesday, May 24th. Thank you.

Nils Ribí