

SCOTT LANDFIELD

The anti-establishment candidate BY ALEX V. CIPOLLE

If Scott Landfield, owner of Tsunami Books, is elected mayor of Eugene come November, what will be the top item on his agenda?

“The first thing I’ll do is demand a recount,” Landfield tells *EW*. He’s only half-joking.

In an election year when it’s become trendy, nationwide, for candidates to puff out their chests and claim to be the anti-establishment choice, this designation seems to actually ring true for Landfield.

For starters, Landfield says he’s not looking for endorsements or sniffing out campaign contributions.

“Let’s see what no money, no endorsements, no campaign coordinator, no campaign staff — let’s see what it can do in this town,” the self-described Independent says. “Hopefully it will inspire a lot of people.”

Landfield has lived a life outside the mainstream: He grew up in southern Illinois where his parents, who he describes as communists-turned-Democrats, ran a newspaper. In 1978, he moved to Eugene. Upon arrival, Landfield planted trees for 20 years, eight of which he spent as a Hoedad — aka a member of the Hoedads Reforestation Cooperative (he was even chairman of the board once). He’s also a prominent member of the spoken-word scene in Eugene.

In 1995, he launched Tsunami Books, also a co-op, of which he is president and general manager. The expenses

of starting the business pushed him into homelessness temporarily.

“There are more of us than you might know,” Landfield says of the working homeless. “I’m somebody who started a business with no money and immediately lost his home and could not afford rent.” He adds, “It was one grade of homelessness; it was real debilitating — there are people way beyond that.”

There are a few important distinctions in Landfield’s platform. First, he is the most outspoken candidate against putting a building on Kesey Square or any public space downtown.

“I have some interesting ideas about how to save it and make it safe,” he says of the square.

Landfield also says he wants to dismantle the present form of government in Eugene — a weak City Council made up of elected officials who only serve (and are only paid) part-time, combined with a strong city manager, an unelected city official who essentially acts as king of the city.

He says he’s also staunchly against urban renewal and the MUPTE tax break, or at least until the process can slow down and the city isn’t pushing through “multi-million dollar” projects without transparency.

For example, Landfield says he’s puzzled how the city could ask residents of south Eugene to pay half the cost of

burying power lines while many members of City Council, along with City Manager Jon Ruiz and city staff, suggest that at least \$4 million of urban renewal funds could go towards a publicly owned fiber optic network for high-speed internet that will only benefit downtown.

The candidate also says he wants to look into campaign finance reform, addressing homelessness, the “huge issue” of the EWEB property and the city’s role in developing it, the “fiasco” of the city’s process with the South Willamette Special Area Zone and term limits.

“We are getting these tired ideas,” he says. “We’re getting people entrenched, including the city manager.”

He points to the unchallenged seats in City Council — Claire Syrett, Chris Pryor, Betty Taylor — as a sign of the erosion of the public trust.

“It’s a broke system when no one is running,” he says. “They’ve given up.”

Landfield says his mayoral run is to show by example how easy it is to civically engage, as well as to ensure that issues like Kesey Square and Eugene’s form of government stay in the limelight through the election.

And if he wins?

“I’ll do the best I can,” he says. “I don’t claim to be a bureaucrat so there will be a big learning curve.”

Landfield adds with a smile: “I do claim to get an inordinate amount of attention.” ■



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