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REDLANDS

**Sceranka, Bean
for City Council**

OUR VIEW: *It's time to inject some fiscal responsibility into municipal government.*

The voters of Redlands are lucky this year. They have an excellent field of candidates to choose from for the two open seats on the City Council. All seven candidates bring something to the table.

That's good, because with the budgetary quagmire the city faces, we need good alternatives to the incumbents, Gilberto Gil and Pete Aguilar. Gil, who has served two terms on the council, must be held accountable for five years of budget shortfalls. As the budget has teetered on the brink, we have not heard Gil sounding the alarm, calling for spending cuts or for new economic initiatives.

Aguilar, who was appointed to the council 17 months ago when former Mayor Susan Pepler left, may deserve a bit of a break. At 28, he's a bright young man with a promising future. We like his ideas about formulating a comprehensive economic strategy and being proactive with local businesses on what they need to succeed.

But we have to wonder, where have these ideas been for the last year and a half?

The council proudly says that, with the discipline brought by the new city manager, it can project a balanced budget this fiscal year. But it's balanced on vacant positions. How can the council declare that public safety is a top priority and leave seven positions open in the Police Department?

We liked the idea of the mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee, and the proposal in Measure F for a 3.5-cent fee on distribution centers sounds reasonable, but it will generate less than \$250,000 in revenue. The projected deficit for next year is \$3 million.

The new Quality of Life Department has a nice ring about it, but it just seems like moving pieces around on the chessboard. It will take the same amount of money and manpower to get those jobs done.

It's time for a change.

The two candidates who bring the most innovative and insightful ideas are Jeff Sceranka and Jerry Bean.

As president of a nonprofit development corporation and with 35 years of business experience, Sceranka brings a vision that no other candidate has expressed in

this campaign. Having lived in Redlands for four years, he's a newcomer. But his experience in Rancho Cucamonga, one of the most successful cities in Southern California, is an asset Redlands can use.

Bean, a longtime newspaper executive, promises to ask the tough fiscal questions we haven't been hearing from the present City Council. He notes, correctly, that city revenues have increased 25 percent in the last two years.

More revenue will help, but Redlands' real problem is spending too much. What we hear from the incumbents are vague generalities about finding new efficiencies, but we get the sense that Sceranka and Bean will actually find them. We also believe they'll make things happen in retail.

For more than 10 years, we've heard promises that the Redlands Mall would soon be redeveloped. We've seen lovely drawings of "The Village" that would replace the mall and include more than 200 condominiums to help create the urban center downtown Redlands needs.

We've also heard the promises of the Redlands Promenade, a project led by the same folks who own the mall, and George Krikorian's Shoppers Lane that together will bring Redlands an inviting gateway in the primary entrance to downtown. But all we see today is weeds and dirt.

Meanwhile across the freeway in the "doughnut hole," Citrus Plaza is proving that retail opportunities abound in Redlands.

If they're true to their words, Sceranka and Bean will help bring the shine back to the Jewel of the Inland Empire. We encourage voters to support them on Nov. 6.