

Brief hearing airs challenge to Spicer's candidacy for Austin mayor nomination

Written by Marty Randall

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A challenge to the candidacy of a woman running in the May 5 Democrat Party Primary Election fizzled to nothing during a hearing held on the matter by the Scott County Election Board on Wednesday afternoon, February 18.

Around 20 people attended the hearing, including the candidate in question, Linda Richie Spicer, her husband Donald Spicer and their attorney, Merritt Alcorn of Madison. Also among the assembled was the man who submitted the challenge prior to the February 13 deadline, Albert Thormyer, a retired banker and respected community leader who also resides in Austin.

Thormyer had pointed out in his challenge that Spicer was residing in a house owned by an Austin church. Indiana election law does not require that a person running for an office own the property in which he/she resides. A candidate must, however, establish a residency in the district in which he/she is running, and Spicer had clearly done that, according to the papers she filed with the County Clerk's Office.

Though Spicer resides in Austin, the family home, at which her husband continues to live, is outside the city limits. Donald Spicer serves as the city's police chief.

In total, the challenge hearing opened by Election Board Chairman Dale Martin lasted 12 minutes.

Martin explained that each side had ten minutes to present their positions on the challenge and then another five minutes to rebuff or support comments.

However, when Thormyer was asked to speak, he said that his challenge was what he had previously submitted, that it seemed odd the candidate would be living in a house owned by a church. County attorney Robert Houston explained that candidates do not have to own the property on which they live nor even pay rent, causing Thormyer to change tactics.

"I've come to the conclusion that, when you look at this (issue) from a different perspective, and

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you have a candidate who is willing to give up her family home so that she can run for an office to try to help her community, perhaps that person should be honored for her convictions," Thormyer stated. "I don't know much about politics and I thank God I don't because I believe it is one of the most corrupt systems we have, but this may be a case where she should be recognized," he said.

Spicer's attorney responded by saying he respected Thormyer "...for coming and voicing your opinion. I've read this statute (on candidate requirements). There's a difference in the residency of a candidate and the residency of a person. It's a matter of intent. Where you get your mail and what address your driver license reflects show your intent to reside there," he explained.

Reflecting on Thormyer's comments, Martin asked board members Fran Satterwhite and County Clerk Missy Applegate for a motion to either support or reject the challenge. Satterwhite made the motion to reject the action, with Applegate seconding it. All voted in favor of the motion.

The issue took a total of 12 minutes to resolve.

After the adjournment of the Election Board, Spicer shook Thormyer's hand and thanked him for his comments. Thormyer in return told Spicer that he did not question her integrity with his challenge. "I just had questions," he said.

Spicer is running for mayor in the spring Democrat Party primary. Her opponents are Ron Atkins, a retired teacher, and Dillo Bush, the current city clerk-treasurer.