

Zine loses bid for neighborhood council seat

By James Nash

Staff Writer

Thursday, November 06, 2003 - WEST HILLS -- Los Angeles Councilman Dennis Zine failed to win a seat in his controversial run for a seat on his local advisory neighborhood councils but said Thursday he withdrew before the balloting.

In the election held Wednesday night, Zine got 43 votes out of 230 cast, putting him in 11th place among the 12 candidates who ran for eight seats.

The West Hills resident said he originally ran for the neighborhood council to try to prevent it from dissolving. The panel's former president, Charles Gremer, resigned and the entire group considered disbanding because of bureaucratic roadblocks from the city of Los Angeles.

But Zine's candidacy was not universally popular. Some neighborhood council members accused him of grandstanding and said they didn't need his help. The City Attorney's Office said Zine should not serve on both the City Council and the neighborhood council, which is supposed to advise him on local issues.

Zine said he withdrew from the race because the panel has stabilized itself, not because of the criticism.

"If I can keep it alive by having people participating to keep it alive, I've done what I tried to accomplish," Zine said. "I'll share in the credit that somehow we sparked interest."

The West Hills council was the first of 26 advisory panels to form in the San Fernando Valley under a 1999 charter reform measure that is expected to yield about 100 neighborhood councils throughout the city.

In August, members of the group considered disbanding, saying the city bureaucracy had frustrated its attempts to get a Post Office box, \$50,000 in promised city funding and a permanent office for the council.

Stephen Lenske, the West Hills Neighborhood Council president, said the city has lifted those roadblocks and that the group no longer is seriously looking to disband.

James Nash, (818) 713-3722 james.nash@dailynews.com