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Comic Ingels loses in bid for Encino panel

By James Nash

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ENCINO -- Marty Ingels was famous enough to land on the cover of TV Guide and star in a 1960s television comedy.

But Ingels' showbiz credentials weren't enough to get him elected this week to a city advisory panel in Encino.

In an election Thursday night for the Encino Community Council, hillside residents overwhelmingly supported anti-traffic activist Laurie Kelson over the co-star of the 1960s television comedy "I'm Dickens, He's Fenster" and husband of Broadway legend Shirley Jones.

According to preliminary results, Kelson got 97 votes and Ingels 34.

The balloting was part of an ongoing process of electing leaders for about 100 neighborhood councils being set up citywide as a result of a 1999 charter reform effort. About half of the councils have had elections.

Ingels and Kelson ran in a zone encompassing some areas south of Ventura Boulevard. The election also saw 14 other people elected to various seats representing residents, business and religious leaders and others.

Ingels, 67, who moved to Encino from Beverly Hills in 2001, was surprised by his defeat but didn't attribute it to any stigma attached to actors-turned-politicians.

"I don't think there's too many people at the local level who'd say, 'Oh, he's a comic so we can't have him.' Maybe if I was running for senator."

Los Angeles' network of advisory neighborhood councils have attracted hundreds of homeowner leaders, neighborhood activists and others. But few celebrities have participated, a fact that city officials attribute to their busy schedules and, some say, perhaps relative isolation from everyday problems.

In Toluca Lake, Roy P. Disney, an investor, former Walt Disney Co. executive and grandnephew of Walt Disney, was elected to the Greater Toluca Lake Neighborhood Council.

Ingels said few celebrities -- even semiretired ones such as himself -- are willing to do the kind of campaigning it takes to win neighborhood council seats.

"It isn't very elegant standing outside the PetCo handing people pieces of paper, let me tell you. It was a very good thing being a human and being humble. I can hardly wait to go tell my therapist what a good thing I've done."

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