

Published October 15 2010

Our view/Endorsement: Fire Fink for Jewell of a county commissioner

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Jewell has a skill set and a rich background to suggest he'll be a compassionate, frugal, responsible and effective county commissioner.

"We're short on resources in St. Louis County," Jewell said in an interview with members of the News Tribune editorial board. "We need to be innovative and create new ways of doing things. I have 30 years' experience doing just that, saying, 'OK, how do we make this happen and how do we do it with less money?'"

In the 1980s, Jewell was a community organizer in Duluth's hillside neighborhoods, rallying residents, attracting needed investment and increasing police protection.

He volunteered and eventually served as president of the Duluth Art Institute. "We figured out how to keep it alive, energize its base and bring new people and new money to it," he said.

He was chairman of the board for five years for Center City Housing, back when the nonprofit worked with US Bank to use tax credits for low-income housing for the first time in Northeastern Minnesota to buy and renovate Duluth's Gardner Hotel.

He was a founder of the nonprofit Duluth LISC, which is working to rehabilitate and revitalize some of Duluth's poorest neighborhoods.

And he's executive director of Men as Peacemakers, a group he helped form in 2000 to counter domestic violence in the community. He has worked as a violence prevention specialist for St. Louis County and has worked with adolescents, the mentally ill and the elderly.

Jewell also served on the City Council from 1987 to 1991.

"We are in for tough budget times, but we still need to be able to provide really high-quality services in St. Louis County," Jewell said, vowing to do his part to continue the County Board's reputation for fiscal responsibility.

"You can't continue cutting and cutting, though," he said. "Taxpayers are rightly mad about tax increases on their houses."

Jewell is a supporter of the Northern Lights Express train from Duluth to Minneapolis, calling it "a real opportunity." He's a believer in taxing income rather than property. And he envisions the creation of a wood-pellet industry in St. Louis County. The energy source would be cleaner than oil or coal and would pour far more money back into the county, Jewell said.

If all of that isn't reason enough to vote for Jewell, voters can consider a vote against his opponent, the incumbent Dennis Fink, whose arrogance and actions in office ought to cost him his position. An investigation found that Fink sexually harassed a female county employee by making sexual comments to her, by making overly personal statements about her appearance and by "ogling" her. He looked up and down over the top of his glasses.

There's more. Following a trip on county business to Washington, D.C., Fink presented reimbursement documentation to the female county employee that included a store receipt for, among other things, KY Sensual Warming personal lubricant. Fink's hotel bill also indicated he rented a movie that he later identified only as "entertainment."

This week, Fink blew off a candidate forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters and other groups. When asked why he wasn't there, he retorted, "That's nobody's business. ... Suffice to say it was county business."

If Fink really was working on behalf of the county, instead of attending a forum he had committed to be at, then whatever he was doing actually was the business of every resident of St. Louis County.

With an appropriate outcome on Election Day, Nov. 2, however, Fink's whereabouts will no longer be the concern of any resident.

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