

Cho aims for seat on Town Council this year



Augustus Cho, chairman of the town transportation board, plans to run for Chapel Hill Town Council this year.

By Sofia Morales
Staff Writer

Augustus Cho can break a concrete block in half with the side of his palm.

As a martial arts instructor, Cho said he strives to teach self-discipline, self-control and self-respect — qualities that he tries to apply to his daily life as well.

"Martial arts is less about fighting but more about developing one's ability to rise above circumstance and developing that warrior state of mind necessary to overcome life's often difficult challenges," he said.

Cho, who ran for mayor in 2009, now plans to run for a seat on the Chapel Hill Town Council. Cho said the Asian community's lack of representation on the council motivated him to run.

"Asians compose 11.8 percent in this community, while African Americans compose 9.5 percent," he said. "It is my belief that at 10 percent minimum we need to have representation."

Cho, who first moved to Chapel Hill to attend UNC, has lived in town for 17 years, he said.

"It really was not in my life plan to be this involved, but I came to realize when I was working overseas that America is a very special place and unless we get involved it will not get better," he said.

Cho said he enjoys his position as chairman of the Chapel Hill Transportation Board because it allows him to seek solutions to the problems facing the community.

"Instead of complaining, I get to be part of a solution by being involved with the transportation board and the community design," he said.

Aside from providing representation for the Asian community, Cho said he wants to focus on fiscal policy if elected to be part of the council.

"We are dealing with difficult economic times, and we need to be fiscally responsible in how we allocate limited resources," he said. "We need to prioritize the budget of Chapel Hill where each dollar maximizes the greatest benefit for the greatest good."

Council member Penny Rich agreed that the state and regional budgets are issues future council

members will have to address.

But Rich also said the council's comprehensive plan, which has not been updated since 2000, will be its top priority for the next 12 to 18 months.

Rich said she thinks a candidate for council should have been involved in the community with experience on a few boards or commissions.

"It should be someone that is familiar with a lot of people in the town so they are able to access opinions from citizens regularly," she said. "People that are willing to listen, not only speak, not only tell us their opinions."

Mayor Mark Kleinschmidt, who beat Cho in the 2009 race for mayor, said that if elected, Cho would bring a great deal of experience to the council.

"While on the campaign trail with him last year, I did develop a great deal of respect for him," Kleinschmidt said. "He is certainly somebody who cares a great deal about our community and where we are going in the future."

Contact the City Editor at city@dailytarheel.com.

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