

This just in: Politician asks supporters NOT to give to his campaign

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In the activities and interests portion of his resume, New London City Councilor Adam Sprepace lists first the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, of which he is a member. A little farther down, he lists softball.

That, to me, helps sum up Sprepace's approach to priorities and his two successful terms on the council.

He is an under-the-hood kind of guy, an engineer by temperament as well as training. He remains ready to digest and analyze complicated problems, someone who will approach issues more analytically than emotionally.

That has served both him and the city well in his time as one of seven decision-makers on the council, especially when there are plenty of others ready to respond emotionally.

Given Sprepace's engineered approach to life and his service to the city, I wasn't surprised to hear this week that he has written to supporters, asking them not to give to his re-election campaign.

That's right. It's a politician saying put your wallet away.

"I am sure this violates everything anyone has ever written about how to get elected," Sprepace writes in his letter to supporters, asking them not to give.

He explains why he doesn't think it is necessary:

"Given the state of the economy (and the fact) I believe my record over the past four years is known, I am hard-pressed to ask anyone to contribute to help 'get my message out.' "

Of course, in a small city like New London, it doesn't take much money to run an elaborate campaign to reach out to many voters. And Sprepace, engineering his re-election, is right in calculating that he probably already has all the positive name recognition he needs.

While he suggests that supporters not send money, he does ask that they get the word out about his campaign and to consider writing a letter to the editor or putting out a lawn sign.

"In lieu of financial support, however, I am asking that you consider helping me spread the word about my campaign and recognize that, if re-elected, I promise to continue to work to ensure that New London moves in the right direction," he wrote.

Given New London's current government, it is hard for individual councilors to stand out from the pack and accomplish much on their own.

Yet Spreace can rightly claim some significant achievements during his short term on the council.

In his letter he cites his help in making revisions to the charter a reality, paving the way for the city to return to a full-time mayor form of government. He also helped improve government transparency, he says, working to get council meetings broadcast and to put up more municipal information on the city's website.

Spreace's most important accomplishment of his last term, though, was certainly his spearheading the effort to bring the Yale Urban Design Workshop here to help plan the future of one of the city's most critical neighborhoods: Fort Trumbull.

The Yale Workshop's excellent report, "Fort Trumbull Vision," was made final this week.

Spreace can claim more credit than any other city official in working on plans and a philosophy to develop Fort Trumbull, not just in the immediate future, but for future generations.

It's not easy to wring the emotion out of the empty streets of Fort Trumbull in New London politics and to try to engineer lasting solutions, but that's what Spreace has tried to do, quietly, and without asking for a lot of attention.

And now he's asking that you not give money to help get him re-elected. Just support him.

That seems like a pretty simple concept, even for those of us not trained as engineers.

This is the opinion of David Collins.