

Cat-traps catapult woman onto Pine Lake's council

City's feline policy provoked her candidacy

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Some citizens are drawn into politics by controversial road projects, a landfill or maybe higher taxes.

It was none of those things that catapulted Sharon Keener to a landslide victory Nov. 2 in the **Pine Lake** City Council race. It was just cats.

Not much longer than a month ago, Keener, a math instructor at DeKalb College, was loudly complaining about the city's decision to sponsor trapping of nuisance felines. The program resulted in the death of one cat who was trapped, taken to the pound for a rabies watch and never claimed by its owner.

An unsuspecting resident told Keener flippantly, "You ought to run for City Council." So she did.

With the nine lives of every **Pine Lake** feline hanging in the balance, she won by a landslide - 108 to 47.

"I thought it would be absolutely amazing if I did win," said Keener. "I was really shocked when I sat there listening to the count and my numbers kept growing and growing."

The controversy which propelled Keener into **Pine Lake** politics began with a City Council decision to purchase cat traps. The city would lend them to residents who complained that the town's cats were running amuck.

"It's extremely inhumane," Keener said of the decision.

Keener and others were afraid that most of the snagged cats would be put to sleep.

Already furious, Keener was further outraged when her own cat was accused of scratching a neighbor's daughter and quarantined by DeKalb County animal control. She said the charges against her feline by the girl's mother were unsubstantiated and unfair.

"That just twisted me a little bit more," said Keener.

Her kitty platform wasn't based solely on the heart, however. She also was concerned that the town's trappers would injure a cat, leaving the city open to a lawsuit by the cat's owner.

"What if a resident files suit against the city?" said Keener. "Who will pay for that lawsuit?"

Suddenly last month, Keener found herself barraged by neighbors urging her to run for council. They liked her strong-willed stance against the traps and saw her as a voice for changing what Keener says is an overly restrictive city.

"I want to live in a city where people are proud to live," she said.

Though she wasn't sure that she could actually win a council seat to make these changes, Keener says much of her support was pledged even before Election Day. Her cat platform seemed effective.

"The majority of people who heard what I said about the traps said 'You've got my vote,' " she admitted.

Color photo: New **Pine Lake** Councilwoman Sharon Keener, with her cat Fred, was provoked