LOS ANGELES—Tomas O’Grady, 44, of Los Feliz, has unofficially announced he will run for the Los Angeles City Council in next March’s election.

“I am running because I think I can make more of a difference on the inside than on the outside. The other reason is City Hall is extremely broken,” said O’Grady.

O’Grady is seeking the seat of current councilmember Tom LaBonge, who has held the seat for Council District 4, since 2001.

“This is democracy and every four years there is an election,” said LaBonge of O’Grady’s announcement. “And people will run. But I am going to run very hard and I hope to have the great support I have had in the past and continue to serve.”

O’Grady first came on the political scene in July 2008, winning a seat on the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council (GGPNC) governing board after tenacious door to door campaigning won him a seat by a landslide 417 votes.

He was re-elected to the GGPNC board, in March 2010, as a member of the winning “Los Feliz Forward,” a slate of 10 campaigning on GGPNC board reforms. In that election, over 1,500 ballots were cast, the most—by far—of any GGPNC election.

As part of those reforms, O’Grady’s “Selected Not Elected” campaign has in part, been adopted by the board. Today, only elected board members can make appointments to the board. Previously, appointed members could, in turn, appoint others, a practice which O’Grady and others felt bred potential cronyism. O’Grady said, the board is also evaluating whether to do away with some or all appointed seats altogether, like nearly all of the city’s other 88 neighborhood councils.

O’Grady’s reach has also been felt at the local school level. Thomas Starr King Middle School’s principal Kristin Murphy recently announced the school will have a new “eco” magnet starting in the fall, 2011, a project spearheaded by O’Grady. He additionally was behind King’s makeover in June 2009, which included the creation of a garden for student use there.
“The little bit I have done in the schools I think I can bring that to city hall,” he said. “From my time working at King, I am convinced that regular people, down to earth ordinary people, need to serve time in government and then go home. I am not going to do this as a career. I want to create an atmosphere where regular people can run,” he said.

Originally from Galway, Ireland, O’Grady immigrated to the United States in 1990. With self-proclaimed little education, he got a job working with a real estate developer on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. With the experience, he bought condominiums in Hoboken, New Jersey. According to an interview with O’Grady for the July 2009 edition of the Los Feliz Ledger, he renovated the condos himself and sold them at great profit.

A handful of years later, O’Grady moved to Los Feliz with his wife Justine. Today he is a singer/songwriter and the founder of Farm Feliz. He has four children.

“I have noticed a lot in the community, that certain politicians show up with camera in hand to take credit,” said O’Grady. “Recently… it seems everything has fallen apart. And someone has to be held accountable for that…

Next year when it comes to the budget and services will be a nightmare. A $180,000 a year councilman should be held responsible.”

O’Grady said he would make an official announcement on his candidacy at the Oct. 30th Halloween Carnival at Franklin Avenue Elementary school.

Also, vying for LaBonge’s seat is Hollywood resident and community activist Stephen Box.