

Mayoral hopefuls begin march toward May

Nominating petitions for mayor, City Council positions become available Friday morning

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. will formally announced his intention to run for re-election on Friday. He will have at least two challengers who will attempt to unseat him.

According to the City Clerk's Office, nominating petitions for residents interested in the mayor's or one of the three at-large City Council seats in the May municipal election will be available on Friday morning.

Based on voter turnout in the last municipal election, there were 14,678 registered voters in Orange, according to the Clerk's Office. That means anyone who seeks a position will need to get 147 signatures — 1 percent of the voters.

All the prospective candidates will be given sheets for at least 200 signatures, the clerk's office said. The filing deadline is March 5.

Two men have announced their mayoral challenges: South Ward Councilman Edward Marable and former city municipal court judge and current City Council legislative



Elroy Corbitt

researcher Dwayne Warren.

Marable was the first to proclaim his desire to run for mayor as far back as the end of 2010, when at least one of his council colleagues, At Large Councilwoman Donna K. Williams, endorsed him. So far, Marable has created a Facebook page for his campaign.

Meanwhile, the news of Warren's candidacy has been spreading



Dwight Holmes

by word of mouth since the start of 2011. He hails from a political family that included an ex-mayor and a former state assemblyman. He has formed a campaign website.

Warren is rumored to have secured the support of former Assemblyman Willis Edwards of East Orange, who served in 2002 to 2005. Although neither Warren nor Edwards could be reached by press



Edward Marable

time, it would place him on an equal footing with Hawkins. Attorney Eldridge Hawkins Sr., was an assemblyman during the 1970s.

At Large Councilman Elroy Corbitt, who has already signed onto the Warren campaign as a member of his slate of candidates, said the fact Marable faces negative rumors regarding his run for mayor should be a cause for concern for

him and anyone thinking about supporting him. Allegations include a supposed riff about not being nominated for the municipal judge position when it was vacant in 2011.

Marable could not be reached for comment by press time, but Warren may have some election issues of his own with which to deal, according to former Councilman William Lewis. During a 2011 council meeting, Lewis asked the council if there was a conflict with Warren working for the council while he was running for mayor.

"The conflict comes from the fact that he is supposed to be giving the council unbiased legal opinions to help them do their jobs. How do we know he's giving them the best possible advice and not something that might be beneficial to him by either causing friction between the council and the mayor or making the mayor look bad," Lewis said. "That is a legitimate concern. Apparently it doesn't seem to bother any of the council members because they haven't said or done anything about it as far as I know."