

First 8 take council petitions

Group includes incumbents, former council member

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

Four years ago, Donna K. Williams, Elroy Corbitt and Rayfield Morton were newcomers who had been elected to the city council. Now, each has confirmed his intention to run for re-election.

Williams, Corbitt and Morton were among the first eight residents who went to the City Clerk's Office to obtain nominating petitions to enter the May 8 municipal election.

That list also includes current West Ward Councilman Hassan Abdul-Rasheed, former West Ward Councilwoman Maria Vandermeer, April Gaunt-Butler, Stephanie Blaine and Dwight Holmes.

Petitions will be offered to residents, who will be required to secure the signatures of 147 registered voters by March 5.

All the prospective candidates were given at least 200 petitions, said a representative of the City Clerk's Office said, so they will have extras in case they are needed.

Corbitt seeks re-election as part of the slate of candidates assembled by attorney and city Legislative Research Officer Dwayne Warren. That group includes Holmes and Gaunt-Butler. Williams and Morton have not said if they will run as part of a campaign.

Morton, in particular, said he is holding his public announcement and potential election affiliations. He said he has been approached, by individuals and groups, who are likely to be rivals, about joining their campaign. Morton said he will consider all options.

"Even though I attended the mayor's re-election kickoff event last week, that does not mean I am running with him or anyone else," Morton said last week during the closing moments of Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr.'s event. "I come from the business and entertainment worlds, so I know all about negotiations and contracts and the need to hold out as long as you can until you get the best deal possible.

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"I might run all by myself or I might run with someone else or I might run on someone's slate," Morton continued. "I haven't decided exactly what I am going to do yet."

Corbitt said he is running because he believes there is much work remaining in Orange and he wants to be one of the people working to improve the city.

"I've always said from the beginning, when I first won office, how important it is for us to all work together, the administration as well as the council, but fortunately, or unfortunately, for the city, that has not happened," Corbitt said. "We have to have an administration and a council that are willing to work together and put aside their idiotic or childlike differences. We have to come together and do what's best for the people of Orange. We have not been able to do that with the current administration."

Williams said she seeks re-election because she is passionate about serving the residents of Orange.

"I think of myself as a person in-between, getting people to understand they need to be involved and your vote does count and your voice does count. Participation is very important because our government is supposed to be by the people for the people," said Williams. "I think one of the highest voter turnouts we had was during President Obama's campaign. For 2012, I would like to see 100 percent of the voters come out and state who they want to represent them. It sends a message that Orange is here; Orange voters care; and Orange voters are going to hold elected officials accountable."