

Hawkins says he will seek a second term

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

Within a week of announcing his intention to seek re-election, Orange Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. turned in the petitions which should allow him to run for a second term.

According to the Hawkins campaign, the mayor filed more than enough signatures with the City Clerk's Office for his re-election bid. The petition submission came six days after Hawkins launched his re-election campaign at a city restaurant.

The City Clerk's Office said 147 valid signatures, from registered city voters, are required to be placed on the May 8 ballot for mayor and City Council. Hawkins submitted 164 signatures and expects to turn in more names.

"The mayor's campaign volunteers are continuing to circulate his petitions and will file additional signatures before the March 5th filing deadline for the May 8th municipal non-partisan election," a Hawkins campaign spokesman said. "Mayor Hawkins said many of the petitions were signed at his campaign announcement when more than 300 participants heard top federal, state and county officials endorse him for re-election."

Among the political officials at Hawkins' announcement were state Sen. and former Gov. Richard Codey, Essex County Executive



Photo Courtesy Hawkins 2012

Orange Mayor Eldridge Hawkins Jr. presents his nominating petitions to Shirley Bailey of the City Clerk's Office. Hawkins announced Jan. 6 his intention to seek re-election for a second term.

Joseph DiVincenzo Jr. and East Orange Mayor Robert Bowser.

" 'Results, Not Promises' is the theme of my campaign. Despite hard times, my administration reduced crime by 23 percent compared to the prior administration; achieved a current budget with no increase in the tax levy; made major progress in redevelopment;

and won major federal, state and county funding with the help of the officials who are now endorsing me," said Hawkins. "I took office just as the U.S. economy was entering the worst conditions since the 1930s and my administration spurred redevelopment despite the difficult economy."

Hawkins said the first initiative

undertaken by his team focused on transforming the Orange Police Department. He said that after he appointed a new police director, the department introduced community policing, conducted gun buybacks, modernized police technology and established a street-crimes unit.

Hawkins also noted what he

scalled his fiscal accomplishments.

"In 2008, I inherited a budget with an 18-percent tax increase and a large structural deficit. Over a period of three difficult years that included major cuts in state aid, my team at City Hall succeeded in digging Orange out of its deep financial hole," said Hawkins. "We achieved a current budget with no municipal tax-levy increase, the first time in over a decade that taxes in the city are stable, and we hope to hold the line on taxes in the 2012 budget as well."

Faced with declining revenues, Hawkins said his administration created public/private partnerships "to stretch the city's tax dollars."

"We partnered with the Barnabas Health Care System to provide health care services to residents of senior citizens' housing, recruited the Heinz Foundation to develop and finance a program of low-cost prescription drugs, and created a partnership to provide technical assistance and loans to Orange entrepreneurs," said Hawkins.

"Our success in reducing costs, rehiring laid-off workers, winning reductions in state-mandated benefit costs, negotiating major work-rule changes and aggressively pursuing federal grants won Orange significant attention in the national news media. These are tangible results that you can see, feel and touch — not promises."