

Mesa City Council race a contest for first time in 6 years

MESA CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES

At-a-glance profiles of the candidates who filed nominating petitions by the May 28 deadline. The Mesa Republic and mesa.azcentral.com will provide deeper profiles and explore candidates' positions on city issues during the summer.

The Republic | azcentral.com



Gary Nelson, The Republic | azcentral.com 9:30 a.m. MST June 4, 2014

Lineup is set for Mesa's Aug. 26 election; city faces the most contested races since 2008



(Photo: Republic file photo)

After a six-year spell that saw only one contested City Council election, Mesa faces three this summer.

The unusually long quiet era in Mesa politics began in June 2008 when Scott Smith became mayor and four other council seats changed hands. It was the biggest turnover in Mesa governance since 1948.

Smith and the other members of the Class of '08 faced no opposition for re-election in 2012.

Now major changes are ahead as the Aug. 26 primary election heralds a new era in Mesa governance.

The new council will have its hands full.

Although Mesa produced a stand-pat budget this year, fiscal pressures are building because revenues are lagging while the costs of commodities and services are soaring. Mesa has little to no wiggle room left in terms of drawing on reserves to help pay the bills.

The next council probably also will face new requests to borrow money for infrastructure, both to accommodate growth and to maintain older parts of the city. And there are big questions about how to encourage and guide development near Mesa's two airports.

Top billing in the election goes to the mayoral race between lawyer John Giles and contractor Danny Ray, who offer drastically different visions for the city.

Smith triggered the special mayoral election when he resigned in April to run for governor. Alex Finter will serve as mayor until the council certifies the election results. He then will return to his District 2 council seat, which is being filled temporarily by Terry Benelli.

The new mayor will finish Smith's term, which ends in January 2017, and be eligible for up to two full terms thereafter.

Terms for council members elected this year run from January 2015 to January 2019.



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Other issues loom

The Aug. 26 primary will settle this year's Mesa council and mayoral elections because no November runoffs will be needed. The winners will have to wait until January to begin their four-year terms.

There will still be items of local interest on the November ballot, however.

Home rule: This is a provision that allows Mesa to spend according to its needs and resources rather than be bound by spending limits imposed by a voter-approved 1980 amendment to the state Constitution. It must be renewed every four years.

General Plan: State law requires cities to periodically get voter approval for General Plan updates. The new General Plan seeks to guide Mesa's growth and governance through 2040.

Bond issues: The council has had preliminary discussions of what is likely to be a sizable package of bonds for Mesa's water, sewer, electric and gas utilities. Such bonds are paid through utility revenue. The council has a July 1 deadline to call the bond election.

Key election dates

- July 17: Last day for primary write-in candidates to file paperwork.
- July 28: Last day to register for primary election.
- July 31: Early voting begins for primary.
- Aug. 26: Primary election.
- Sept. 8: Official primary results released.
- Oct. 6: Last day to register for general election.
- Oct. 9: Early voting begins for general.
- Nov. 4: General election.
- Dec. 1: Official general-election results released.

How to register

- To vote: servicearizona.com/voterRegistration.

• For early voting: recorder.maricopa.gov/earlyvoteballotnet/permanentevlist.aspx.

• Find your polling place: recorder.maricopa.gov/pollingplace/pollingplace.aspx.

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