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Mayor, two ward seats contested in Glenarden election

Further Woodmore Towne Centre development focus of campaigns

by Natalie McGill | Staff Writer

Candidates running in Glenarden's three contested races say they are interested in seeing continued growth in and outside the Woodmore Towne Centre as well as more recreation opportunities for residents.

Ward 1 is the most contested council race, with former councilman James Herring, current councilwoman Carolyn Smallwood and challenger Marsha Peeks running to fill two Ward 1 seats. In the mayoral race, Mayor Gail Parker Carter will run to keep her seat against former mayor Donjuan Williams.

Jennifer Jenkins, elected in a Feb. 9 special election to fill the one open Ward 3 seat vacated by former councilman George Reid, will run again to hold onto that seat against her previous special election challenger Judy Diggs. Diggs could not be reached for comment.

Residents Maxine E. Phifer and Celestine E. Wilson will be running to fill the two open at-large council seats. Councilman Irving Haywood (At large) said he is not seeking re-election after serving since 2007. Council President Margaret Dade (Ward 2) and current Councilwoman Elaine Carter (At large) will run to fill the two open Ward 2 seats.

Herring said if he is elected to represent Ward 1, one of his focuses will be getting back \$2 million in Woodmore Towne Centre developer impact fees he says former County Executive Jack B. Johnson (D) verbally promised the City Council to build a new police station. Herring said receipt of the money was contingent on having an engineering study, site plan and architectural plan drawn up for a vacant lot between Leslie and Johnson avenues, but when the council decided against that lot, they lost the opportunity. Herring said there was not anything in writing promising the money and acknowledged it would be difficult to get a similar commitment again.

Herring wants to hire more police officers to cover the area since at least 1,100 homes are planned for the residential portion of the Woodmore Towne Centre at Glenarden.

"I think it can be achieved without raising city taxes," Herring said. "I think with the development coming in now, I think we will be able to achieve that with the sales taxes coming in. I think in the fiscal 2013 budget we should be able to do that. We should be getting the full benefit of the property taxes from that development by then."

Williams, 49, a consultant, served as mayor from 1995 to 2001. If elected Williams said he will push for economic development in the city's older areas such as the land across from City Hall on the corner of Glenarden Parkway and Martin Luther King Jr. Highway and an empty lot next to Smith's Barbershop. He also wants to see the city's youth services bureau — which provided counseling, parenting classes and juvenile monitoring — reinstated. Williams said he combined the bureau with a city recreation program that also provided mentoring and basketball.

Parker Carter said she wants to expand partnerships with businesses, such as working together on community events, and to push for possibly annexing properties abutting the town off Ardwick Ardmore Road, Hubbard

Road and Brightseat Road. She also would like to see more attention paid to city recreation programs, particularly for seniors — such as adopting a senior citizen to rake leaves or shovel snow for.

"The senior programs I would like to see here are programs or workshops that will assist with their computer skills, workshops that help them understand the impact of the federal health plan, programs that will assist with social services that are available to them and easily accessible to them," Parker Carter said.

Jenkins, sworn in March 7, was already on her way to Ardmore Elementary School on Monday to talk with the principal about traffic congestion her ward faces when school dismisses and parents sometimes double park to pick up children. A 41-year resident, Jenkins was as an acting city manager from 1995 to 1997 under former mayor Williams and is a troop leader for local Girl Scout Troop 2597. She currently works in management for the state government.

Another issue Jenkins wants to work on is getting Wegmans to change their location from "Wegmans Woodmore" in Lanham to Glenarden on their website. While Jenkins said she believes it's merely an oversight with a quick fix, she said some residents choose not to shop there because they feel offended the Glenarden name is not present even though the shopping center is inside city limits.

"That's upset my constituents very much, like when Fed Ex Field first came and Jack Kent Cooke wanted to call it 'Raljon,'" Jenkins said. "You put this shopping center in Glenarden and that's what you're going to refer to it as. They know that Lanham is not incorporated. They're paying taxes in Glenarden."

Council members Barbara Armstrong (Ward 1), Deborah Eason (Ward 2) and Irving Haywood (At large) will not be seeking re-election. Armstrong has served on the City Council since 2003 and said she is looking for other ways to serve her community such as volunteer work she's done in the past with So Others Might Eat, a Washington, D.C., nonprofit for the city's homeless. Eason, who was first elected in 2009, could not be reached for comment.

Haywood, 66, said he enjoyed serving on the council but wants to move on with his life and said the current conduct of the meetings is disrespectful.

"I've done all I can do as far as the meetings being conducted and run the best that I could do," Haywood said. "It needs some cleaning up before I can even think about becoming a council person again."

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