

May 4 elections

Norfolk council field largest in decades

By Harry Minium

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NORFOLK

In recent years City Council incumbents generally have coasted to reelection with little or no opposition. But four incumbents, including Mayor Paul Fraim, may not have such an easy time in the May 4 election.

Eighteen candidates were certified to run in six races Tuesday night, the state deadline for candidates to file, deputy registrar John Merkel said. It's the largest field of council candidates in 40 years.

Five of six races will be contested, four incumbents face at least one challenger and three races will have four candidates.

Many challengers have criticized the council for failing to spend more on neighborhoods and for what they call a lack of openness. Most incumbents say impending budget cuts and discontent with incumbents in general explains the unusually large number of candidates.

Fraim is being challenged by Councilwoman Daun S. Hester, Old Dominion University student Ryan Cooper and Dan Montague, a community leader and longtime council critic.

By challenging Fraim, Hester must relinquish her Ward 7 seat on the council July 1 regardless of whether she is elected mayor. The council will appoint her successor.

Willoughby businesswoman Barbara Saunders, former Norfolk police Lt. Chuck Brewer, attorney Andy Protogyrou and Ocean View artist Paul Trice are on the ballot in Ward 1. Incumbent Don Williams is retiring.

Incumbent and former School Board chairwoman Theresa Whibley has no opponent in Ward 2.

In Ward 3, Vice Mayor Anthony L. Burfoot faces former Old Dominion University basketball standout Billy Mann, civic league leader Mamie Johnson and Donna Smith, head of the group that runs Afr'Am Fest.

Councilman Paul R. Riddick, who has been on council since 1992, is being challenged by School Board member Billy Cook in Ward 4. Michael Muhammad had planned to run, but announced Monday he would endorse Riddick instead.

W. Randy Wright, who has also been on the council since 1992, is being challenged in Ward 5 by Tommy Smigiel, Granby High assistant principal and former Virginia Teacher of the Year, and East Beach businessman Matt Hales.

Saunders ran against Williams in 2002 and 2006, garnering about 43 percent of the vote in Ward 1. Brewer, an Ocean View resident, said that race is perhaps the most difficult in the city to predict.

"It's impossible to say what's going to happen," he said. "But it's good that voters will have so many choices."

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