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TOP STORY

Mesa Primary: 5 for mayor, 3 council battles

By Scott Shumaker, Tribune Staff Writer
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2024 Mesa Mayoral candidates

These five candidates are running for mayor in the July 30 primary election



Carey Davis



Mark Freeman



Scott Neely



Scott Smith



Ryan Winkle

The local elections on the July 30 Primary Election ballot could be consequential for Mesa as a majority of seats are up for grabs, including the mayor's chair.

Sixteen Mesa residents filed statements of interest in the upcoming race to replace term-limited Mayor John Giles, but all except five withdrew or failed to submit the required signatures by last week's deadline.

The five mayoral candidates who qualified for the Primary are Carey Davis, Councilman Mark Freeman, Scott Neely, former Mayor Scott Smith and former council member Ryan Winkle.

Voters will also have choices for the three other council seats up for grabs – especially in northwest Mesa's District 1, where four are jockeying to replace Freeman. The councilman is term-limited from running for the current seat, but he can run for mayor.

Rich Adams, Zachary Hichez, Tim Meyer and Ron Williams qualified for the District 1 ballot.

The District 2 and District 3 races are not as crowded, but both of the incumbents in those seats will have to face opponents in the primary.

In south central Mesa's District 2, Melody Whetstone is challenging incumbent Julie Spilsbury. In West Mesa's District 3, Marc Lavender is challenging incumbent Vice Mayor Francisco Heredia.

If any candidate gets a majority of total votes cast in their primary election race, they are declared the winner; if no candidate gets more than 50%, the top two vote-getters head to a runoff in the November election.

MAYORAL RACE

Carey Davis

Davis is a certified public accountant. Before moving to Mesa, he served as mayor of San Bernardino, California, from 2014 to 2018. He ran for mayor of San Bernardino after the city filed for bankruptcy and oversaw the creation of the city's plan to exit bankruptcy.

Mark Freeman

Freeman is currently serving his second term as District 1 council member. He is term-limited from running for his current seat. Freeman is a retired Mesa firefighter and is proprietor of Freeman Farms. He is a member of SRP’s District 9 council and serves as Mesa’s representative on the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association.

Scott Neely

Neely is a local business owner whose ventures include Action Concrete Pumping on Southern Avenue. He’s lived in Mesa for over 20 years. Neely mounted a longshot bid for the 2022 Arizona Governor’s race. He came in fourth in the Republican primary.

Scott Smith

Smith was mayor of Mesa from 2008 to 2014. Prior to his years as mayor he worked as a business executive and consultant. Most recently he served as CEO of Valley Metro before retiring in 2022.

Ryan Winkle

Winkle is a community development consultant and chair of the Arizona Asian Chamber of Commerce. He was elected to the Mesa City Council for District 3 in 2016. During his first year in office, he was arrested in Tempe for DUI. The council voted Winkle off his seat in response to the arrest.

District 1

DISTRICT 2



Julie Spilsbury



Melody Whetstone



Francisco Heredia



James "Marc" Lavender

Julie Spilsbury

Spilsbury was elected to council in 2020. Prior to serving on council, she helped to run a family tree care business with her husband for 23 years. She volunteered with Mesa Public Schools for over 20 years. Last year she was selected as a Flinn-Brown Fellow.

Melody Whetstone

Whetstone has worked for over 15 years in the telecommunications industry in various capacities from land acquisition to design and construction. Her campaign website states that she volunteers in efforts to combat human trafficking.

Francisco Heredia

Heredia was appointed to the council in 2017 to replace Winkle and won elections for the seat in 2018 and 2020. Last year the council elected him to serve as vice mayor. He owns a political consulting firm and print shop in Mesa. He has also worked in government and for nonprofits.

James “Marc” Lavender

Lavender lists his occupation on social media as mortgage broker. He ran unsuccessfully for the District 3 council seat in 2018.

District 2



Rich Adams



Ron Williams



Zach Hichez



Tim Meyer

Rich Adams

Adams has worked for 40 years in business management and commercial credit management. He has served on numerous local boards, including Mesa’s Economic Development Advisory Board, Visit Mesa, Mesa Planning & Zoning Board and Mesa United Way.

Ron Williams

Williams served in the U.S. Air Force for 14 years. He went on to run several nonprofit business development organizations and was managing partner of a restaurant at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport. He currently works in business consulting and serves on Visit Mesa’s board of directors.

Zach Hichez

Hichez is a full-time paramedic. He has been a paramedic and EMT for the past four years. He has lived in Mesa for 11 years and earned his EMT certifications at Mesa Community College. While attending MCC, he worked part-time for Mesa Public Schools’ Xplore extended day program.

Tim Meyer

Meyer has worked for the City of Mesa for 26 years. He is currently the assistant director of business services at the city. Prior to that he was the business licensing and revenue collections administrator. If elected, Meyer would have to step down his city job, according to the City Charter.