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Candidates qualify for upcoming elections

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PINELLAS COUNTY – The candidates' qualifying period for the November 2008 elections ended on June 20.

Voters will trek to the polls for the primary election on Aug. 26 to decide the final roster of candidates for the Nov. 4 general election. July 28 is the deadline for new voter registrations and party changes for the primary. Registered voters may make name and address changes through Election Day.

According to the elections calendar, the Supervisor of Elections Office will begin mailing overseas and military absentee ballots for the Aug. 26 election on July 8. Domestic ballots will follow on July 10. Early voting is scheduled from Aug. 11 to Aug. 23.

During the primary election, voters will have the job of choosing who will appear on the November ballot in local races for property appraiser, sheriff, two county commission seats, plus voting on candidates running for three school board positions.

Incumbent Property Appraiser Jim Smith is not running for another term. Republicans Pam Dubov and Frank Gregoire will vie against each other during the August primary for the chance to run against Democrat Ben Friedlander in the November election.

Democrats Randall M. Jones and John Pikramenos will compete in August for a slot on the November ballot against incumbent sheriff Republican Jim Coats and no party affiliation candidate Greg S. Pound.

District 1 County Commissioner Ronnie Duncan has decided not to seek another term. Voters registered as Republicans will decide between Neil Brickfield and Jane Gallucci in August for the candidate to run against Democrat Paul Matton in November for the district 1 seat.

District 3 County Commissioner Robert Stewart also has decided against running for another term. Registered Democrats will choose between Rene Flowers and Darden Rice to take on Republican Nancy Bostock in November for the district 3 position.

No primary election is required in the race for county commissioner, District 5. Independent Jake Mullens, Democrat Norm Roche will attempt to unseat the Republican candidate incumbent Karen Williams Seel in November.

Commissioner Ken Welch is unopposed for the District 7 county commission seat.

Four candidates qualified in the race for district 1 school board position: Janet R. Clark, Jennifer S. Crockett, Max Loden, and Grant Smith.

Five qualified for the district 2 school board seat: David O. Archie, Nina Hayden, Minetha Morris, Sean O'Flannery and Ron Walker.

Four candidates also qualified for the district 4 school board spot: Chris Hardman, Steven D. Isbitts, Ken Peluso and Robin L. Wikle.

Carol Cook is running unopposed for the district 5 school board position.

Ken Burke also is running unopposed for the job of clerk of circuit court, and no candidates signed up to oppose Tax Collector Diane Nelson.

Republican Deborah Clark, current supervisor of elections, will be opposed by Democrat Jack Killingsworth in November.

According to information posted on the supervisor of elections Web site, major party candidates have three ways to qualify to run for office: by fee, by petition or by write-in.

For example, to qualify by fee to run for the office of property appraiser, the candidate had to pay 6 percent of the annual salary of the position – or \$8,881. Gregoire paid the qualifying fee.

To qualify by petition, candidates had to collect signatures of 1 percent of the registered voters in the county as of the last general election. Dubov qualified to run by collecting 6,180 valid ballot signatures. She also paid a signature verification fee of 10 cents per name.

Write-in candidates must file appropriate forms by the deadline and reside within the district represented by the office

sought. Names of write-in candidates do not appear on the ballot.

Candidates with no party affiliation and minor party candidates may qualify to appear on the ballot using the same method as major party candidates. The qualifying fee is 4 percent. The requirements to qualify by petition or write-in are the same.

Sheriff's candidate Randall M. Jones qualified by petition; Jim Coats and John Pikramenos paid a qualifying fee of \$6,264; and Greg S. Pound used the write-in method of qualification.

Complete election and candidate information is available at www.votepinellas.com.

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