

Candidate hopes voters return for June 7 primary

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Both the candidates and the Forsyth County Board of Elections are preparing for another South Ward primary on



June 7.

The N.C. Board of Elections ruled on Wednesday, April 6 that, due to irregularities in the South Ward Democratic primary, the election for that City Council seat will be redone in the June 7 primary. John Larson, who was just six votes behind his opponent, Carolyn Highsmith, filed a protest that involved incorrect ballots that were given to voters. The local BOE eventually found that 31 voters received incorrect ballots that didn't have the South Ward race on it and 12 voters cast ballots in the race that shouldn't have. Due to the tight deadline to get the 31 voters to recast their ballots, which would have had to have been done by the next day, and since it wasn't possible to discount those 12 ballots that shouldn't have been cast, the state board ruled for an entirely new primary.

With incumbent Molly Leight retiring from the City Council and two candidates vying to succeed her, the turnout was high in the original primary, with 4,052 votes cast in the South Ward contest. Larson, who is the vice president of restoration at Old Salem, said he hopes those voters will return for the new primary.

"I would hope that those people also understand that the disenfranchisement of their neighbors, of their friends who wanted to vote and thought

they did vote, was an injustice and that needed to be corrected," said Larson.

The treasurer of Larson's campaign, Bill Hoyt, is a lawyer and helped him prepare his protest. He also hired legal council from the Raleigh-based Bailey & Dixon law firm.

Highsmith, a retired nurse and head of the Konnoak Hills Community Association, actually prepared her own argument before the state board. She crammed over the weekend on election law and her argument involved voters having the responsibility to determine when they're given the wrong ballot and that the local board of elections had certified the results, saying the errors were statistically insignificant. She said the state board had a low threshold for electoral errors and that she isn't upset with the ruling.

"I understand why they made that decision," said Highsmith. "We're ready to keep going on to June the 7th."

Forsyth BOE Director Tim Tsujii said that the new South Ward primary will be added to the ballots for the already planned June 7 primary, which will feature races for U.S. House of Representatives seats and a N.C. Supreme Court seat. It will also be included on a notice that will be mailed to voters about the June 7 primary. He said that the BOE will try to make sure the mistakes don't happen again through training and procedural changes.

The South Ward race has been a surprisingly close one. Larson, who plans to retire from Old Salem in December, was asked by Leight and others if he'd be interested in running for the seat. He said he decided to run because he's interested in continuing to serve the community. Though it's his first campaign, some on his vol-

unteer campaign staff have local political campaign experience. He campaigned in a variety of ways including mailers, yard signs, newspaper ads and holding receptions.

Larson said he had expected the primary to be close because of Highsmith's political experience and notoriety in the community, but is hoping for a better outcome this time.

Highsmith said she became a community

advocate in 2007 because of an increase in crime in the South Ward. She accepted requests to be a write-in candidate for the South Ward in 2009 as a protest vote for the crime in the area. She ran a campaign for the seat in 2013, losing to incumbent Molly Leight, an election she said she learned from. She felt Leight's retirement gave her a fair shot at the seat, so she gave it another try. Highsmith also had mailers and yard signs, but she said

newspaper ads were too expensive for her campaign.

She felt where her campaign excelled at was reaching voters by going door-to-door and that her message that she'll better represent the ward resonated. Highsmith has sometimes worked with Leight on issues like the South Suburban Neighborhood Plan. Though she's also been on the other side, like when the New South Community Coalition,

which she's a part of, asked for a "no frills" bond in 2014 devoted to just roads and infrastructure, which she said are in need of more funds.

Highsmith said she'll do her best to win again, though she hopes with a wider margin this time.

The winner of the South Ward Democratic primary will face Republican Michael Tyler in November.

April is Fair Housing Month

SPECIAL TO THE
CHRONICLE

The city's annual observance of Fair Housing Month began Friday, April 1, when Council Member Jeff MacIntosh read a proclamation by Mayor Allen Joiner during the Fair Housing Month Kick-Off Luncheon at the Winston-Salem Regional Association of Realtors Office.

Fair Housing Month promotes the Federal Fair Housing Act and its laws against housing discrimination. 2016 marks the 48th anniversary of the signing of the Fair Housing Act by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968.


Winston-Salem has a fair housing ordinance that mirrors the Fair Housing Act. The Winston-Salem Human Relations Commission and Human Relations Department are responsible for enforcing fair housing laws locally to ensure fair and equal housing access and treatment for all people regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, disability, family status, or religion.

The city's annual Fair and Affordable Housing Summit for housing professionals will be held Thursday, April 21, at 11:30 a.m. at the Benton Convention Center, 301 W. Fifth St. During the summit, the New Horizons Fair Housing Committee will present its annual Breaking Barriers Fair Housing Award to Carol Davis, the executive director of the Simon G. Atkins Community Development Corporation.

Also, First Baptist

Church (Highland Ave.) will host Project Homeless Connect, sponsored by the United Way of Forsyth County and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. It will be on April 15, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. To register or to volunteer go to www.forsythunitedway.org and follow the link.

For more information call CityLink 311.




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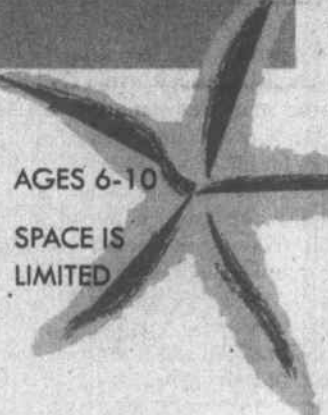
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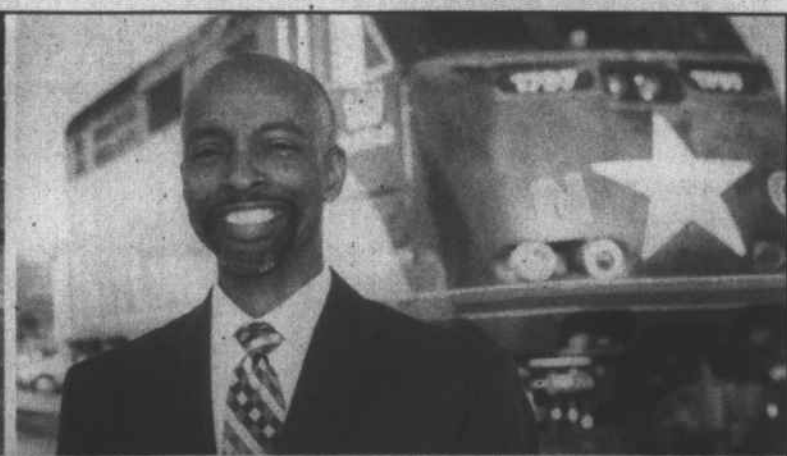
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