

Fresno City Council District 6 hopefuls start lining up

By John Ellis
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Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearingin reaches her term limit next year, so it's not surprising that much of the local political attention has been focused on who will seek to replace her.

Lost in the speculation — at least at this early stage — are the three city council seats that also will be on next June's primary election ballot.

The most important may be District 6, the northeast Fresno seat currently held by Lee Brand, who like Swearingin will reach his term limit — and to date is the only announced mayoral candidate.

The District 2 and District 4 council seats are also up for election, but current Council Members Steve Brandau and Paul Caprioglio can both seek second terms. That doesn't mean those races won't be competitive, but Brand's District 6, being "open," is bound to draw the most attention because there is no incumbent.

Already, two people are running, and a former occupant of the seat is considering a return.

To date, Holly Carter, the former Fresno County GOP executive director who now owns her own public relations firm, was the first to file official paperwork. She filed a candidate-intention statement with the Fresno city clerk earlier this month.

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Fresno City Council District 6 candidate Holly Carter

Carter, 47, who is making her first run for public office, says she's running because the council needs an advocate for small business.

"I make a living off of the dysfunction of the archaic processes that we have in place at Fresno City Hall," she says. "It isn't right that somebody has to hire me to figure out how to fix their permitting, or their zoning."

Carter was reluctant to give out much more information in anticipation of her formal public announcement on Monday, but public safety is also on her radar. She mentioned that her daughter's elementary school was recently on lockdown after a nearby home invasion.

"Crime is out of control," she says.

Jeremy Pearce, 40, also says he's in. He filed his candidate-intention statement this week.

Like Carter, Pearce is making his first run for public office. Many people might know him better as Jeremy "Elvis" Pearce, "the most booked Elvis in California."

But Pearce says he has a political science degree and at one point worked for former Rep. George Radanovich, a Mariposa Republican.

He also has already earned two key endorsements — from Brand and Brandau.

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Fresno City Council District 6 candidate Jeremy Pearce

Pearce says he has “the greatest job in the world” — a job he says will continue as usual if he wins the council race — but as he and his wife got more involved in Fresno’s civic life, he began thinking about running for political office.

“I just got tired of everything I’m seeing in town, the state, the country,” Pearce says. “The more we got involved, the more we wanted to be involved.”

Looming over Pearce and Carter is the possible candidacy of Garry Bredefeld, who held the District 6 seat from 1997 through 2000.

“I’m certainly considering running,” says Bredefeld, a psychologist who has largely been quiet on the political front since leaving the council in 2000 after an unsuccessful mayoral run. “Many people are calling me, and continue to, asking me to run.”

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Garry Bredefeld, who held the District 6 Fresno City Council seat from 1997 to 2000

Before making a decision — which Bredefeld says will come by the end of the year at the latest — he says he needs to look at his business and personal matters to make sure he is ready for such a commitment.

One person not running is Cary Catalano, who lost to Esmeralda Soria last year in the District 1 city council race.

There was some talk earlier this year about Catalano moving to District 6 and seeking Brand’s seat. Catalano said some people encouraged him to do it, but after thinking it over, he decided against it.

“I’m just going to stay put,” he says, noting there could be other city council opportunities in the future.

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