

Detroiters Must Participate In Primary Election



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Detroiters who have been complaining about the actions of their City Council have an opportunity to do something about that this August and again in November. But it is going to take some work on the part of Detroiters to make that happen.

All nine seats on the Council are up for election this year. Two incumbents – Sheila Cockrel and Barbara Rose Collins – have already announced they will not seek re-election. That means some turnover is inevitable. The question before Detroiters is whether those two seats alone will be enough change or whether they want a Council that has a major infusion of new leadership with new

energy, new ideas and new results.

With more than 200 candidates on the council ballot, clearly we have a huge variety of potential council members to choose from. That means Detroit voters are going to have to do some major studying to separate those who represent real change from those who would represent the status quo or those who may just be looking for a job. That studying must begin now.

I've heard too many people suggest that they'll wait until after the primary election and then figure out who they want to support for Council. But waiting means 90 percent of the potential council members will be eliminated before you start your selection process.

If we want a good council, then we have to make sure we have the best candidates to choose from. And that means starting to support them now to make sure that they do survive the primary.

Only 18 candidates will survive the primary. And if the past is any indication, only the top 10 or 11 of those have a realistic chance of being

among the nine that will be elected in November.

So by refusing to get involved in the primary process, voters in reality lose their opportunity to make real choices about who will represent them. They leave it up to other voters. And that increases the odds that we will end up with another dysfunctional council similar to the one we've seen supposedly working on our behalf the last three and one-half years.

It's not too early to start the weeding out process. Check out the candidates. Go online to see how many have set up websites and what the content of those sites is. A candidate who doesn't have a web site is either so disorganized or so dismissive of public opinion that he or she doesn't deserve your vote anyway.

Get out to neighborhood forums where candidates are appearing. Ask them questions. Find out how they feel about the issues that are important to you and your neighborhood. What is their plan for bringing new jobs to Detroit? How would they propose to improve public safety? What is their view of the Council's role in

government? How would they work with our new Mayor? Those and many other questions deserve thoughtful answers from anyone who would want to represent you.

If the recent years have shown us anything, it's that we our criteria when we vote must be more than which names are familiar to us. "Name recognition" is no reason to vote for any candidate.

Recent years have also shown us how important the primary is to what eventually happens in November when the new City Council is chosen. So my strong appeal to all Detroiters is this: Do your homework. Find out all that you can about each candidate, their history, their experience, their philosophy of government, their motivation for seeking office and their work ethic. When you find a candidate you like write it down. Start a list of the candidates you believe will move this city forward. Share the list with your friends and family.

Then vote in the primary. Vote for the candidates you truly deem willing and able to help make the changes our city so desperately needs. Only

then will we end up with the City Council that we must have if we are to make real progress in Detroit over the next four years.

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