The city scene . . .

Conjectures start to stir for city vote

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Political interest, somewhat in the doldrums since the Idaho Legislature finished its chores early last spring, should begin perking up soon for the biennial city elections.

It may be a surprise to most that the candidate filing date is only a month away. This should impress candidates who are thinking of running; they had better begin lining up their support—if they have any.

Now is the time to determine if the city administrations have run their municipalities to the likening of the majority of the voters. In past years in Idaho Falls, incumbents are usually re-elected but occasionally there are changes and on at least two instances there was a virtually house cleaning.

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In Idaho Falls, the four incumbents whose four-year terms expire this year have left no doubt they are interested in seeking re-election. They include Mayor Thomas Campbell and councilmen Melvin Erickson, Paul Hovey and Ralph Wood.

The salaries aren't especially attractive but they aren't bad either. The mayor now gets $29,640 while the parttime councilmen pocket $4,800 a year each.

The candidate filing will begin Sept. 24 and closes Oct. 6, or a three-week filing period for the Nov. 3 election. Each candidate must get at least 1 percent of the voters on his petition, or 40 qualified names, meaning those who are registered, are 18 or over, and reside in the city.

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Already there has been some activity with petition papers obtained by Wood, and another batch by Jan Brown, an employee at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

Ms. Brown, public involvement officer with EG&G and who has been active with the Idaho Conservation League, acknowledges some interest but emphasizes she is far from decided.

Also mentioned as possible candidates are Mrs. Pat Bybee, businesswoman and civic worker; William R. "Bill" Jones, city customer election service director who plans to retire this year; Kent Just, businessman and former Greater Idaho Falls Chamber of Commerce executive vice president; and Alex Creek, civic leader and former city councilman.

There is also slim possibility that some of those who ran well in the 1979 municipal races might look at another try. These include former City Clerk Roy C. Barmes and Marion Orme, who finished a strong fourth and fifth, respectively, and barely out of the money.

Two others who finished farther down the list of the record 13 entries, Milton Adams and Al Pasta, also have been mentioned as possible hopefuls. Adams finished sixth and Pasta eighth in the 1979 election.

The outstanding traits of all of these potential aspirants are their indecision at this time; in fact, they appear leaning against it; in most cases, rather strongly.

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The only one mentioned for the mayoralty contest aside from the incumbent is Pat Brown, well known Idaho Falls business and former clothing store proprieter but who is now director of the Idaho Falls Building Authority. Brown admits he has been approached and is somewhat interested. He added only an indication that he could win would influence him to leap in the contest but so far such a possibility is not apparent at this time. Chances of him running are slim.

It appears the city administration, particularly the mayor and the mayor pro tem, Erickson, are riding high.

There are few serious complaints, mostly centered among a small segments regarding zoning. There have been protests on the west side transmission lines but these residents aren't city residents and don't vote in city elections.

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The mayor already is planning his campaign and has picked Ann Ryldach, who was his campaign manager four years ago, to again head his re-election committee. Marion Hammond will serve as his finance chairman.

The mayor is especially proud of the city financing, noting the city has weathered through the crisis in excellent shape.

Since 1978-79, he said, the city has kept within the letter of the law on the 1 percent tax initiative. The city will keep within the 5 percent increase allowed the 1982 fiscal year budget, although the budget will rise to $33 million. The mayor emphasized the budget the coming fiscal year is mostly for operation. There will be about a $1.5 million surplus but some $500,000 will go to purchase badly needed new equipment for water and sewer departments, and about $1 million for electrical department.

He also said the city electrica power rates will rise but the city has no control over these, as they are dictated by the Bonneville Power Administration. At that, the city power rates will be far under those of other Idaho cities.

The mayor has placed on the back burner a proposal for a $90 million fourth turbine facility, saying there isn't time enough for such a proposal to be placed on this November ballot. He said it likely will be voted on in the spring. The new facility would almost double the city's electrical generating capacity, assure adequate city power for the next decade and help bring about cheaper electrical rates, a rare accomplishments in these inflationary times.

The mayor also points with pride to the three turbine electrical project, airport expansion, new senior citizens community hall, and excellent relations between the city administration and employees. All were recently given about 10 percent salary increase.

The mayor and city administration now appear in a rather formidable position but it is possible a councilman or two could be beaten. If this were to happen it probably would be because of the personal popularity factors, not administration policies.