

The Post-Register

The political pulse

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The city scene . . .

Rumors spread as city election filing opens

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Rumors are spreading of opposition to Mayor Thomas Campbell for the Nov. 3 biennial city election, but so far they have proved to be nothing but that.

Mentioned in city political circles as possible mayor candidates were Bob J. Bybee, the national leading esteemed knight, the No.2 position in the 670,000 Elks organization and a veteran supervisor with EG&G at the INEL; and Gary J. Paxman, state legislator and who operated the now closed Paxman drive-in for many years but currently is employed with McClaskey Ford Tractor Inc.

Both, however, said they aren't interested, although Paxman acknowledged a couple of city leaders had urged him to run, while a delegation offered its support to Bybee.

Bybee has indicated he intends to retire next spring but he will be kept busy traveling in his national Elks position.

He also plans to seeking the top position of Elks exalted ruler next year, which would occupy most of his time. He feels his chances for winning this post are 50-50. Right now, he is convalescing from a hip replacement operation made necessary because of arthritis.

The only other possible candidate mentioned was Pat Brown, a former clothing store proprietor and now with the Idaho Falls Housing Authority. He also strongly indicated he will forego the contest.

All three of the mayoralty challengers have said they felt Campbell is doing a good job and that he would be difficult to beat.

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These rumors are buzzing just as the official filing opens Thursday for city candidates in the more than 350 cities of Idaho for the three-week period ending Oct.6. Most larger cities will elect a mayor and two or three councilmen. Most of the smaller cities will elect just two councilmen, and a few will choose mayors.

Reports indicate that in Idaho Falls the incumbents may run as a team and will underline this by filing simultaneously at the opening of the city clerk's office Thursday at 9 a.m.

The incumbents, Mayor Campbell and Councilmen Melvin Erickson, Ralph Wood and Paul Hovey, had previously obtained their nominating petitions and have them filled with the required 40 names or more. They must be registered voters and city residents.

Pat Bybee, Idaho Falls business woman and wife of Bob Bybee, said she also has her petitions signed but will wait to see how large is the field before deciding whether to jump in the contest.

Another possible challenger, Jan Brown, EG&G public involvement officer and best known for her active participation with the Idaho Conservation League, also is standing on the sidelines pondering running.

There are also a couple of other nominating petitions issued to unidentified persons. Those who get petitions do not need to sign their names.

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Two other candidates mentioned for councilman announced they definitely will not enter. They are Kent Just, businessman and former Greater Idaho Falls Chamber of Commerce executive vice president; and Alex Creek, civic leader and former city councilmen. They said they are too busy at this time with other business activities. Just, besides his retail business, is a part time representative of the Idaho In-keepers Association, while Creek is busy with various state tourism commission and industrial promotions.

Mentioned earlier were those who made strong showings in the 1979 municipal elections but so far they have shown no signs of interest. These include former City Clerk Roy C. Barnes and Marion Orme, who finished a strong fourth and fifth, barely out of the money. Finishing farther down were Milton Adam and Al Pasta, who have told friends they have given some thoughts for another attempt.

Another possibility William R. (Bill) Jones, who just Monday announced his retirement as city customer service advisor, admits some interest.

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If there are more than six who enter the three City Council positions it would strongly favor the incumbents on the well established axiom that office holders have their following and the challengers would need to split the opposition vote. However, if only two or three others aside of the three incumbent council should run, then a strong challenger or two would have a chance of victory. At present, however, Campbell looks almost unbeatable, while Erickson, Wood and Hovey in that order hold distinct advantages for re-election.