The city scene . . .

First interest stirs for city council races

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It's still the dull dog days of August, but interest is beginning to stir for the biennial city elections Nov. 6.

Some of the appeal will be missing as no mayor will be elected but Idaho Falls citizens will be called on to choose three councilmen.

The terms expire of the veteran councilman, Jim Freeman, and also of two who had been appointed two years ago, Charles L. Clark and Sam Sakaguchi.

Freeman has said he definitely will not seek re-election after rounding out four terms, or 16 years; Sakaguchi has dropped the word he will seek to retain his position; while Clark at this time said he is truly undecided and may wait until early September before he makes up his mind.

Freeman, editor of a cable television magazine and active in many other phases of civic affairs, said he believes he has served long enough and wants to devote more time to his business.

Sakaguchi, an employee of an Idaho Falls irrigation supply company, recalled saying at the time of his appointment two years ago, he likely would seek re-election. He added he found the job challenging and educational, even though not entirely enjoyable.

Clark, a retired naval commander, served as superintendent at three school districts and has been active in a number of mental health and other state health programs.

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Four names already have been dropped in the rumor hopper as possible candidates and there likely may be more. The prospective prime candidates are Roy W. Barnes, retiring as city clerk; Alex Creek, oil wholesaler and former city councilman; Fred Tingey, now director of the Idaho Falls Center of Higher Education for the University of Idaho and former assistant EG&G, Inc., manager; and Wes W. Deist, athletic manager for an Idaho Falls sporting goods store.

All four can be considered formidable aspirants which would indicate sizzling contests for the three positions. In fact, it looks like one of the best fields to enter city council races in many years.

The stringent 1 Percent Initiative has largely taken away the usually dominant financial issue but there likely will be plenty to argue about in the matter of zoning, annexations, city personnel, policies and a wide range of other municipal problems.

In most respects it may be a personal popularity contest.

Barnes is presently in the hospital convalescing from operations on aneurysm (blood clots) and internal bleeding but he expects to be discharged shortly. Barnes has served 22 years but was reappointed after reaching age 65 until Oct. 1.

Deist ran two years ago and attracted 6,600 votes which would indicate considerable support.

Tingey served nine years on the Idaho Falls School District 91, seven as chairman, and was usually the leading vote getter.

Creek has been prominent in civic affairs for many years, but feels relinquishing much of his oil wholesale business to sons will give him more time for return to the City Council.

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The filing period is between Sept. 27 and Oct. 9. Registration this year is taken at the Bonneville County Election Office at the courthouse, not the city hall, because of joint city-county voter registration, to be used for the first time.

Under the joint arrangement, city residents will cast ballots at 26 precincts, which are patterned for the county election, and not the 16 city precincts of the past.

"The 26 precincts are more than we need for the city but it was necessary under the joint city-county system," commented Barnes.

The council job pays $350 a month, or $4,500 a year, and it entails spending many long hours at City Council, committee and other meetings. The mayor's salary is $24,000 yearly, below those of some department heads.

The active campaign is expected to commence soon after the Sept. 3 Labor Day holiday, which signals start of the active fall season.

Holdovers for two more years are Mayor Thomas Campbell and Councilmen Melvin Erickson, council president; Paul Hovey and Ralph Wood.