

Local Elections Near in Castle Hills

FEBRUARY 2, 2012 BY PATRICK KELLY AND JOHN EHINGER

The year 2010 proved historic for Castle Hills. With public elections held for the first time in our brief history came fliers from residents looking to become more involved, yard signage for water board candidates and letters from the developer outlining concerns with various involved parties.

We come again to another election year in our neighborhood. For those of you who have been following our articles, you know the important role the water boards play and broad responsibilities of the directors who sit on these boards. For example, you will recall they set property taxes, water and sewer rates and allow for certain exemptions that directly affect your property taxes. These boards effectively guide our neighborhood in the same manner a city council steers a town or a board of directors guides a company. As such, we should all be aware of the elections coming in May, the seats up for challenge and especially the candidates looking to fill those seats.

Overall, there are 18 seats available for candidates this year. These seats currently are filled by a mixture of original appointees and elected officials with a mixture of residents and non-residents. Look for the most dust kicked up in the 1B elections. With strained relations between 1B and the developer and 1B and the 1A managing district, the three open seats could change the dynamic of the board and these relationships considerably. Additionally, 1H also has three open seats. The remaining boards (1A, 1C, 1D, 1E, 1F, and 1G) each have two seats available. However, residents currently only live in 1B, 1D, 1E and 1F.

There are several key dates in the election process:

Feb. 4 – First day to file for place on general election ballot

March 5 – Last day to file for place on ballot

March 13 – First day to apply for ballot by mail

April 12 – Last day to register to vote

April 30 – First day of early voting

May 4 – Last day to apply for ballot by mail

May 8 – Last day of early voting

May 12 – Election Day

The qualifications to run for a position are minimal. In general, a candidate must be at least age 21, a Texas resident and either be a qualified voter or own taxable property in the district. There is a great, albeit dated, handbook published by the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (now the Texas Center for Environmental Quality) called 'TNRCCWaterDistrictHandbook.' Google will take you right to the publication. Just be sure to use this as an overview and not a Bible as it's about 15 years old.

If you should decide to run for the board, packets will be available from the 1A offices in the plaza and on its website (dentoncountyfwsd.com) for all districts except 1B (see contentious relationship

mentioned earlier). Packets for 1B should be available by contacting the 1B attorney, Misty Ventura, at (214) 323-1101. The process to file as a candidate is relatively simple, but there is a fair amount of paperwork and accuracy most definitely counts. The staff at the 1A office, any of your current directors, Misty Ventura, John Ehinger, or I will be happy to talk with you further about the process and responsibilities of the post.

The basic responsibilities of being a water district director are to show up for meetings and to be familiar with the issues to be voted on at each meeting. The boards meet monthly with a typical meeting lasting between four and six hours. Further, DCFWSD 1A has hosted additional meetings for new director orientation and budget review. Board meetings are ordinarily preceded by a fairly broad packet circulated to each director and, as of 2010, made available publicly on the 1A website. Throughout the year, district boards set tax and water rates, comment on 1A's budget, review and approve various agreements and audited financials, address legal matters that arise and generally are presented with a large amount of detailed information on the workings of the various municipal systems.

As you may expect, voting in smaller elections such as these is extremely important. It's not likely any one candidate will receive more than 100 votes. As such, your vote most definitely counts and can make the difference between a win and a loss. Voting will most likely take place at the Carrollton library on Josey. Turnout was pretty strong last time especially for a first-time election. There were also, as to be expected in a first-time election, certain difficulties in the process. Boundary issues coupled with polling staff who were not necessarily familiar with our particular form of government led to some issues. As such, it's important for you to understand what district you are in and your candidates. Again, the staff at the 1A offices, current directors, Misty Ventura, John, or I will be happy to talk with you to help ensure you are prepared on election day.

All politics are local. The water board is arguably the most local form of government you will ever encounter. Your involvement, whether as an informed resident, an active participant, a candidate, or a voter is critical. Please get involved in local politics.