

Special election ballot solidified

By Josh Baugh

March 10, 2014 | Updated: March 10, 2014 9:38pm

SAN ANTONIO — Councilman Joe Krier, who was appointed in November to fill the District 9 seat after Elisa Chan resigned, will face four challengers in a May 10 special election.

Councilman Mike Gallagher — appointed in January to succeed District 10 Councilman Carlton Soules, who left the council to run for Bexar County judge — did not draw an opponent. At a future meeting, the council will adopt an ordinance declaring Gallagher the winner in the District 10 race.

In District 9, Krier, 67, will face off against Ret. Air Force Col. Bert Cecconi, a retired dentist; Donald Oroian, a civil engineer; Corey Clark, owner of TrueCare Lawn Service; and Weston Martinez, a corporate design engineer at AT&T.

Traditionally, incumbents enjoy an advantage over their challengers, though they tend to have more time in office before voters go to the polls. Krier points to a growing list of issues he's tackled since taking office, including the streetcar project, public-safety issues and concerns over streets and drainage.

“In four months, I have enough of a record that I think voters can make a decision not on what I say I can do, but on what I have been doing,” he said.

Krier said he combines experience working for his district's neighborhoods with working on big-picture issues, such as water, military-base closures and jobs and economic development.

Krier, who served as chief executive officer for the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce for two decades, has asked City Attorney Robbie Greenblum to render an opinion on whether the city can call a referendum on its own \$32 million funding for the VIA Metropolitan Transit's streetcar project. He expects a response this week.

This race marks the third time Martinez, 38, has sought the District 9 office. In 2005, he ran against Kevin Wolff for the seat, and then he took on Chan in 2009.

He's running on a platform that is anti-streetcar and anti-status-quo.

“We've got to return to basics, and we've got to restore balance in our city government,” he said.

Last year, when the council passed a bolstered nondiscrimination ordinance to add protections for sexual orientation and gender identity, he promised to recall everyone who voted for it. The movement has since died out; no one was recalled. But Martinez said he believes he can work with the current council, nonetheless.

“Once I'm elected and once we get in a room, I think the other people will have a fair and reasonable understanding,” he said.

Cecconi, 78, takes a different position on the streetcar issue. If elected, he would try to keep the city from spending any further funds on rail projects without voter approval. It's a lost cause to try to reverse the money that's already been allocated, he said.

“That's like the Spurs worrying about the games they lost last year,” he said.

Cecconi, who has run for office several times but never won, is a recent addition to District 9. When political lines were redrawn recently, he found himself no longer in neighboring District 8.

The two districts share similar issues, he said, such as transportation woes. But while North Side residents have focused on U.S. 281, Cecconi wants to ensure that Wurzbach Parkway doesn't create a bottleneck going into the South Texas Medical Center.

Oroian, 41, said he plans to run as the “infrastructure” candidate.

“I think infrastructure and public safety are the prime issues a councilman should be concerned about,” he said.

Oroian points to his experience on the city's Planning Commission and service to his homeowners association as reasons to be elected.

Clark, a former part-time intern for Councilman Rey Saldaña, is a late-comer to the race. He said in an email he would represent the district “in an honest, non-judgmental, and transparent manner” in an attempt to create a “better and happier community.” He said he is concerned with traffic, emergency response times and education.

“If elected, I will focus a lot of time and energy into promoting educational resources, programs, incentives and the like,” he said.

jbaugh@express-news.net