

City Council hires Garner as new municipal court clerk

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Hiawassee City Council Members voted unanimously last week to hire Jennifer Garner as the city's new municipal court clerk during their regular monthly meeting on March 3.

Garner started in the position the day after her offer of employment, on Wednesday, March 4.

The city put out a call for and received nine applications to fill the position following former municipal court clerk Cenlya Galloway's departure in February.

Galloway had been Hiawassee's municipal court clerk since Wylene White retired on Oct. 30, 2014, after 26 years working in City Hall.

Mayor Liz Ordiales and

City Clerk Bonnie Kendrick interviewed seven of the nine applicants before narrowing candidates for the position down to just two: Garner and one other person.

Next up, council members gathered on Monday, March 2, to review resumes and interview the two applicants, after which the mayor and council discussed the candidates together.

Pleased with Garner's resume and legal experience, the council decided to hire Garner in the regular city meeting the very next day.

"We're going to go with Jennifer Garner, who we all believe has the best resume," Ordiales said of the council's decision, and Councilwoman Nancy Noblet added that Garner was definitely the most

qualified applicant for the job.

The other applicant was well qualified, too, Ordiales said, though they were lacking in terms of having the legal background to fit with a court situation.

Garner, who just relocated to Young Harris from Savannah, has nine years of experience in the legal field working as a paralegal.

"I've always wanted to be a clerk of court," Garner said during the interview process.

Municipal courts have jurisdiction over traffic offenses and other misdemeanors within city limits, as well as ordinance violations, and the court clerk job is not to be taken lightly.

"The tasks of municipal court clerks, which include processing warrants and sentences issued by the judge

and collecting fines and fees paid into the court, require careful diligence," according to the Georgia Municipal Association. "Failure to properly process paperwork can lead to false arrest, and failure to properly administer court fees is in many instances a crime itself.

"Employees assigned to work in municipal court should thus be properly trained. State law requires that municipal court clerks receive annual training."

Once Garner settles into her new part-time role, Ordiales said the city might be able to give her more legal responsibilities, like putting liens on properties or collections of property taxes.

Also during the meeting,

council members approved a new lawn maintenance contract with Mountain Living. Coming in under \$14,000, Mountain Living submitted the lowest bid by over \$1,000, Ordiales said.

In the February work session, Timothy Barrett discussed and presented city health benefits up for renewal, which council members approved during their March 3 meeting.

The council also unanimously approved the purchase of a new wastewater treatment pump in the amount of \$16,000, which Ordiales said will replace an old one that blew up recently.

Mayor Ordiales and the Hiawassee City Council will meet again on Monday, March 30, at 6 p.m. for their monthly



Municipal Court Clerk Jennifer Garner
 Photo Chad Stack

work session inside City Hall in the upstairs training room.

Qualifying...from Page 1A

Judicial Circuit qualified unopposed for the May 19 Nonpartisan Election, paving the way for her to begin her first full term in 2021 after being appointed in 2018 by then-Gov. Nathan Deal.

Candidates qualifying for District 8 State Representative are Republicans Stan Gunter of Blairsville and Steve Townsend of Clayton, and Democrat Dave Cooper, also of Clayton.

Qualifying for District 50 State Senator are Republicans Andy Garrison of Jefferson, Dan Gasaway of Homer, Stacy Hall of Clarkesville, Bo Hatchett of Cornelia, Tricia Lynne Hise of Clarkesville, Lee Moore of Franklin Springs, and Democrat Dee Daley of Clayton.

Current District 50 State Sen. John Wilkinson of Toccoa has served in that seat since 2011, though he decided not to seek re-election to the Georgia General Assembly in 2020 so he could run for Georgia's 9th Congressional District.

District 8 State Rep. Matt Gurtler of Tiger is also running for the 9th Congressional seat, to which Rep. Doug Collins has chosen not to seek re-election as he eyes the remaining two years of Sen. Johnny Isakson's U.S. Senate term.

Republicans joining Wilkinson and Gurtler in the 9th Congressional District Race are Michael Boggus of Commerce, Paul Broun of Athens, Andrew Clyde of Jackson County, Maria Strickland of Blue Ridge, Kevin Tanner of Dawsonville, Ethan

Underwood of Cumming and Kellie Weeks of Gainesville.

Democrats running for the congressional seat are Devin Pandy of Athens, Brooke Siskin of Norcross and Dan Wilson of Rabun County.

Many contenders have qualified for the Nov. 3 Special Election to fill the remaining two years of former Sen. Isakson's term following his 2019 resignation for health reasons, including Sen. Kelly Loeffler, whom Gov. Brian Kemp appointed last year for a one-year stint in the seat.

Republican candidates for this U.S. Senate position are Loeffler of Atlanta, Doug Collins of Gainesville, Derrek E. Grayson of Lithonia, Annette Davis Jackson of Lilburn, A. Wayne Johnson of Macon and Kandiss Taylor of Baxley.

Democratic candidates vying for the seat are Deborah Jackson of Lithonia, Jamesia James of Atlanta, Tamara Johnson-Shealey of Tucker, Matt Lieberman of Atlanta, Joy Felicia Slade of Atlanta, Ed Tarver of Augusta, Raphael Warnock of Decatur and Richard Dien Winfield of Athens.

Brian Slowinski of White Plains was the sole Libertarian candidate to qualify for the race; John "Green" Fortuin of Athens was the lone Green Party candidate to qualify; and Rod Mack of Hapeville was the only Write-In candidate.

Joining other qualifiers for the Senate Special Election were Independents Al Bartell

of Atlanta, Allen Buckley of Atlanta, Michael Todd Greene of Mableton and Valencia Stovall of Ellenwood.

Georgia's other U.S. Senate seat currently held by Incumbent David Perdue, an Atlanta Republican, is up for election this year as well. He was the lone Republican to qualify for the seat.

Democrats vying for their party's nomination in the May 19 General Primary are Sarah Riggs Amico of Marietta, Marcketh DeJesus of Atlanta, James Knox of Evans, Tricia Carpenter McCracken of Augusta, Jon Ossoff of Atlanta, Maya Dillard Smith of Atlanta and Teresa Pike Tomlinson of Columbus.

Shane Hazel of Waleska qualified as a Libertarian candidate, and he will face Perdue and the winner of the Democratic primary in November.

In two statewide races, for Public Service Commission, Republican Lauren "Bubba" McDonald Jr. and Democrats Daniel Blackman and John Noel qualified for Northern District 4, while Republican Jason Shaw and Democrat Robert Bryant qualified for Southern District 1.

There will still be a chance for candidates to qualify later in the year for many elective offices in the November General Election via nominations by petition and write-in candidacies, and interested residents should check the Georgia Secretary of State's website for more information.