

Webster Groves is Ground Zero for key County Council Contest

By Jo Mannies, Beacon Political Reporter



Posted 12:45 p.m. Wed., July 8: The city of Webster Groves appears to have an early lock on St. Louis County's 5th District County Council seat, since it's the home of the only two announced candidates so far -- Republican and Democrat.

Former Webster Groves Mayor **Terri Williams**, who used to be a Green Party activist years ago, announced over the weekend that she's running in 2010 as a Democrat for the council seat soon to be vacated by fellow Democrat **Barbara Fraser**, who's running for the state Senate instead.

Williams had a sizable contingent of dozens of supporters in Webster's July 4th parade, a holiday staple for political candidates on all levels. (Those participating Saturday included the only announced GOP candidate for the U.S. Senate in 2010, Rep. **Roy Blunt** of Strafford.)

About six weeks ago, former Webster Groves councilman **Randy Jotte**, a physician and a Republican, [confirmed that he was running](#) for the county council seat. Jotte, 49, narrowly lost a bid for the state House in November 2008 to Democrat **Jeanne Kirkton**, who also served with him on the Webster Groves City Council.

The 5th District often has been key political swing territory in the county. Fraser obtained the seat in 2006 when she defeated veteran Republican incumbent **Kurt Odenwald** (now a judge). Democrats now hold five of the seven council seats.

Jotte has said his key campaign issues will include the need for "prudent, responsible fiscal management" of the county's money, and his interest in improving public transit.

Williams, 48, said she plans to meet with citizens in the district, as well as office-holders and civic leaders, to hear from them what they see as key issues and concerns. "It's important to talk to the community first," she said, citing the 5th District's huge footprint, which spans from Olivette south to Grantwood Village.

Jotte's tenure on Webster's council came after Williams had stepped down as mayor, a post she held from 1994 to 1998. Her tenure was a spirited one, including an unsuccessful recall effort in 1995 launched by some of Williams' critics.

Since leaving office, Williams has been executive director of the Webster Groves-Shrewsbury Chamber of Commerce and has held the posts of citizen advocate and taxpayer's advocate positions in county government. She currently is chairwoman of the University of Missouri St. Louis County Extension Council.