

Candidates ready for new roles on council



KELLY BRECKUNITCH/INFORMER

Gabe McKeever (left), Jared Brown (middle) and Jessica Rhein are among the newest members set to join the Derby City Council after the Nov. 4 general election.

BY KELLY BRECKUNITCH
kelly@derbyinformer.com

With election night come and gone, the Derby City Council officially has its newest members — though most of those were decided prior to Nov. 4, with only one contested race (Ward IV) this year. Though the excitement may have been lacking on election night, it is just beginning for the council members, three of which will be completely new to their governmental roles. Mike Neel (Ward I) was the only incumbent to seek re-election. All three new council members are looking forward to taking on their new roles, with Jessica Rhein (Ward III) ready to help with the bigger community picture after serving on Derby Planning Commission for several years. “I’ve been involved in the planning commission

for so long that I’m excited to try something new with the city,” Rhein said. “I’m really excited to serve the people and hear from others what they are wanting to see and try to represent as best as I can.” Not from Derby originally, Rhein found enjoyment when being tasked with Derby projects (through her job with Sedgwick County Public Works) even before moving to the community 15 years ago. Given Derby’s “forward thinking” approach, she became passionate about helping the community — first with the Planning Commission and now the council. Rhein noted she intends to go back and watch past council meetings to reacquaint herself with the full scope of the governing body’s work (knowing planning items are just a portion) before being sworn in in January.

Looking ahead though, she hopes to help the city maintain its future planning efforts. “I just want the city to continue to grow in a controlled way,” Rhein said. “I think growth is an important part of staying a vibrant city, and I think controlling that growth is also important.” Fellow council member elect Gabe McKeever (Ward II) is also excited about taking his seat in January. Since taking a volunteer position with the library board seven years ago, McKeever noted serving on the council and helping on a larger scale has been the goal. “That kind of planted the seeds. Eventually I always wanted to shoot for council, then the time came,” McKeever said. “I think turning 40 had something to do with that.” While running

unopposed, McKeever did do some campaigning and based on what he heard he intends to help improve communications and make the public more aware of city business once he takes office. Before taking his seat, McKeever also intends to brush up on council meeting procedures and take in the first few meetings once sworn in — though he, like Rhein, knows growth will continue to be a pertinent topic. That and funding will be among his immediate focuses. “For my time, or my place in time running for council, it’s just going to be [about] trying to bridge that gap and grow as smart as we can,” McKeever said. “Figuring out the right blend of sales tax versus property tax, that’s always going to be a balancing act, but hammering that down is the number one priority.”

As for Jared Brown (Ward IV), the lone candidate to win a contested race, he was grateful for the win on election night after all the work put in campaigning. Brown took 49% of the votes in Ward IV to earn his seat on the council — and intends to repay that. “It is a lot of sleepless nights, and nobody knows until the results come in, and I just appreciate everyone’s support,” Brown said. “Now it is getting involved in the next four years and making sure I follow through and help the city as a whole. The focus is on finding the balance of what the community wants to see and listening to the people who voted for me.” The new candidates, along with incumbent Neel, will officially be sworn in for new four-year terms in January 2026.

News Briefs

Work begins on K-15 bridge repair project

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) has closed the K-15 entrance ramp from southbound I-135 — impacting Derby-bound motorists — as part of a bridge replacement project starting Nov. 11. For the project, the southbound K-15 bridge over the Wichita drainage canal will close for reconstruction. It is expected to remain closed until December 2026. A detour will direct drivers south on I-135 to the S. Hydraulic Avenue exit, then east on E. MacArthur Road, and south on Southeast Boulevard to rejoin K-15. Motorists are encouraged to allow extra travel time for travel due to the construction, which will also limit traffic under the bridge on K-15 to one lane in both directions.

USD 260 eyes updates to communications

Derby Public Schools is looking at implementing a new district-wide communications system after utilizing Skylert for the past 12 years. To better meet the needs of the schools, families and community, the district is trying to consolidate communications to a single platform that will improve family engagement (including two-way multilingual and mobile accessibility) and ensure integration with other district systems. After getting feedback from staff on the current systems used a request for proposal will be brought before the Derby school board for consideration in the near future.

County pursues community survey

Sedgwick County is launching an online community engagement survey to gather feedback from residents on county-provided public services and public priorities. The public will be able to share their feedback through the Sedgwick County website (sedgwickcounty.org) and social media platforms later in November. It will conclude in December. County leaders are conducting this survey to engage residents on service delivery and community priorities. As part of the County’s strategic plan and commitment to transparency and accessibility, feedback gathered will help shape budget and workforce priorities that directly impact services to the community.

Cold Weather Rule takes effect

The Kansas Corporation Commission announced the Kansas Cold Weather Rule began on Nov. 1 and will run through March 31. The rule prohibits utility companies from disconnecting service when temperatures are forecast to fall below 35 degrees within 48 hours. It applies to residential customers of KCC-regulated utilities, though many municipal utilities and cooperatives have similar policies. Customers with past-due balances can set up 12-month payment plans by contacting their utility, paying a portion of the balance and fees upfront, with the remainder spread over 11 months. More information is available at kcc.ks.gov or by calling 800-662-0027.

FRAUD

from page 2

comments,” she said. “It’s important that we respect both due process and the integrity of our local government.” Lenertz said in a telephone interview that the city is unsure what, if any, implications it would have for city business if it is determined Ceballos has not been eligible to hold office. She said the city is reaching out for guidance on the issue. During a news conference in Topeka, Kobach and Schwab said the state is actively

pursuing cases like this by using the federal Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements, or SAVE, database, which can be queried by states to determine a voter’s U.S. citizenship status. According to The Center Square, 26 states are using the database to verify voter registration information. Schwab confirmed Kansas has begun using the SAVE database to check voter registrations, but also said the case against Ceballos was not compiled using the database. Kobach has waged a campaign for years

claiming significant voter fraud and pushing for stricter voting regulations, including proof of citizenship laws and showing photo identification at the polls. Schwab, who is the state’s top elections officer, said until Kansas began recently using the SAVE database, he had disagreed with Kobach that there was much of an issue. “We’re currently verifying. We don’t want any false positives, but attorney general, be prepared to be busy as we go through these and find out potential positives of people who are non-U.S.

citizens that have voted,” Schwab said. “I was never really a big believer this happened. I always came from the angle of, let’s prove it’s not happening, and then we get the data, and it’s important we clean this up.” Kobach said he expects there will be hundreds of people on the voter rolls who are not legally eligible to vote. Although that may be a small number compared to the 2 million registered to vote in Kansas, it matters, he said. The argument that illegal votes are a small percentage of total votes cast is a “red herring,” because in close races

even a small number of votes can make a difference, Kobach said. “I would argue that even when it doesn’t affect an outcome, it still effectively takes the vote away or cancels the vote of a U.S. citizen,” he said. Schwab said he believes elections in Kansas are secure. “Overwhelmingly, our elections are secure, but I’ve said it for seven years. We look at election security sort of like we look at cyber security. You can win today, but then you find out something new, and then you’ve got to find another way to make it better,” Schwab said.



Seniors Love Living at Homestead!



“I LOVE ALL THINGS ABOUT HOMESTEAD OF DERBY.”

Nancy Miller has been a resident at Homestead of Derby since May 2023

How do you like being a resident of Homestead of Derby?
I love it here because I have nothing that is difficult to do to maintain my household chores. It is all done for me.

What do you like best about Homestead of Derby?
I don't have any one specific thing that I like. I love all things about Homestead of Derby. The camaraderie with the other residents, the staff, and all the activities that are offered.

Would you recommend Homestead of Derby to your loved ones?
Yes, and I already have. After my sister-in-law visited a few times, she noticed how much my husband and I enjoy it here and how I don't have to worry about taking care of the house, cooking meals and medication management.

Call (316) 816-1428 to See What Nancy is Raving About!

Homestead of Derby | 1701 Walnut Grove Road, Derby, KS | HomesteadofDerby.com

YOUR CITIZENS BANK OF KANSAS

Home Equity Line of Credit

CAN BE USED FOR MUCH MORE THAN A NEW KITCHEN, BUT IT CAN ALSO GET YOU THE KITCHEN OF YOUR DREAMS!

Call **316.788.1111** today to LEARN MORE about our HELOC.



