

Choctaw

Voters to select new leadership

By Ryan Horton
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Choctaw's City Council will have a new look after this April's municipal election.

Four of Choctaw's seven elected officials are currently serving in their first term, and the three long-time members will pass the torch this spring.

Longtime mayor Randy Ross will retire this year alongside longtime councilmembers Jennie Abts and Steve Krieske.

Choctaw's next mayor will be Chad Allcox or Reggie Tynes.

Voters from all six city wards will choose between Allcox, 40, and 52-year-old Tynes.

Ward 1 and Ward 5 voters will also be tasked with selecting their local representative.

Chad Williams, 42, is seeking a second term representing Ward 1. He'll face Tracey Hibbler, 51, in the April election.

Cody Brewer will replace councilwoman Abts at the helm of Ward 3.

Brewer, 39, was the only candidate to file for the seat.

ML Fletcher, 59, has filed to replace Krieske in Ward 5, but Calvin Moore, 63, has also filed for the position.

The municipal election is set for April 4. Polls will be open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The new Choctaw City Council will take office in April, and serve four-year terms, with commitments expiring in April of 2027.

Jones



Recent projects widened the street and installed sidewalks along Main Street in downtown Jones. PHOTO BY RYAN HORTON

Town sees infrastructure improvements

By Van Mitchell

Voters in Jones previously approved a one-cent sales tax increase dedicated for water and wastewater infrastructure improvements.

And, some of those projects are underway including drilling a new city water well, adding a new water storage tower, and replacing residential water meters and residential gas meter dials, said Mayor Ray Poland.

"We have not been able to make any major improvements to our water/wastewater infrastructure over the last 35 years," he said. "Over the last 38 years, we have increased steadily in our population, and have reached our capacity in our wastewater treatment plant. We were fortunate enough to get the citizens to pass the one-cent sales tax increase. Since then, we were able to get a \$10 million dollar loan from the Oklahoma Water Resources Board that will enable us to drill a new water well, and put in a new water tower. We are waiting for the contractor to drill the test well before we drill the actual well."

Poland said the Town of Jones has two water wells that it pumps out of the Garber-Wellington aquifer that supplies the water for the town.

"We currently have a storage tank that stores water in it. We don't have what you call a true water tower that generates adequate pressure for our water system," he said. "With that water tank, we can only utilize 20 percent of it, because when it gets to 80 percent capacity, we start losing pressure. It is not a good water delivery system. The water tank that we have was purchased in the early 1970s. It is in really decent shape for as old as it is because we have taken good care of it. But, as Jones is growing, our water needs are growing. What we are looking to do is improve our current system and provide for growth in the future."

The Central Oklahoma (Garber-Wellington) aquifer underlies about 3,000 square miles of central Oklahoma and underlies all or parts of Cleveland, Logan, Lincoln, Oklahoma, Payne, and Pottawatomie Counties. Water from the aquifer is used for public, industrial, commercial, agricultural, and domestic supply.

Poland said United Technology Services was awarded the contract for replacing residential water meters and residential gas meter dials.

"We awarded the bids for our AMR's (Automatic Meter Readers) for our water and gas system," he

said. "We have upgraded all of our water meters, and we are awaiting parts due to supply-chain issues to complete the gas meters."

Poland said the city is addressing the city's current and future water needs through a new water tower.

"We will be adding a water tower that will give us constant water pressure," he said. "Water out of any storage tank is all gravity-fed. The more water you can put higher in the air, the better water pressure you will have. Once we get all this done, I expect that we will be able to expand to future housing developments as they come. When we get them (water well, water tower) online, it will give us the water pressure volume that we need to be able to expand out in the city where needed."

Poland said the Town of Jones received two Rural Economic Action Plan Grants (REAP) for wastewater collection replacements, and a stormwater drainage study.

"We are working on replacing/repairing wastewater collection lines as needed," he said. "Living next to the North Canadian River, we get a lot of stormwater runoff. The stormwater drainage study will help us hopefully learn how to better manage that better."