

NEWS

More incumbents drop out of Ventura County races as extension period nears

ax collector to step down in Ventura County

**Kathleen Wilson**

Ventura County Star

Published 2:45 p.m. PT March 7, 2022 | Updated 12:48 p.m. PT March 8, 2022

A wave of new faces will be in charge of key offices in the Ventura County government next year, election filings posted through last week show.

County Clerk-Recorder Mark Lunn and Treasurer-Tax Collector Steven Hintz have both decided not to seek their fourth terms in the June primary, joining Assessor Dan Goodwin who announced less than two weeks ago that he would not run for his seventh.

The officials said they felt the time was right after long years of public service. Lunn and Hintz have both worked in government jobs for 50 years, while Goodwin has served in the assessor's office for 31. None of their current posts is subject to term limits.

Lunn said he loves what he does and had every intention to run, but reconsidered after a lot of self reflection.

"I need more time for myself," he said Friday, adding that he can't remember the last time he took a two-week vacation from the high-profile job.

Lunn, 68, of Newbury Park said he still planned to be active in the community after his term ends in January.

More: Heated races on tap as election filings get underway in Ventura County

Among the highlights of his tenure were record voter registration and turnout along with measures to deter fraud and identify theft, he said. Lunn said he increased the security of government records by adding a new land records system to thwart hackers, requiring identification for individuals seeking records of births, marriages and deaths, and other measures.

Hintz, 74, of Ventura, said he felt he had achieved nearly everything he set out to do, including cost and management efficiencies. The exception is a new software system for administering property taxes that will be in place by the time he leaves, he said.

Nor did he think it was fair to ask voters to elect him to another four-year term, given the health uncertainties that accompany his age.

He has no specific plans for his career after leaving office.

Hintz said he could reactivate his law license but that he won't return to his former occupation as a judge.

"There are options," he said. "We'll see how it plays out."

All three men have endorsed their top assistants for the posts commanding agencies with which average residents regularly deal. Included in their responsibilities are managing elections, collecting property taxes and assessing the value of real estate.

But two outside candidates have emerged along with the internal choices. More could materialize now that it's known the incumbents have bowed out.

The three officials' decisions not to seek re-election trigger a five-day extension to Friday's deadline to file to run for those positions.

The extension is permitted to provide prospective candidates additional time to file with the knowledge they won't face incumbents. The deadline expires at 5 p.m. March 16.

Lunn's top aide, Assistant Clerk-Recorder Michelle Ascencion, joined the race to succeed her boss Friday. Also seeking the position is Connie Marie Gutierrez of Thousand Oaks, who did not provide an occupation for the ballot and could not be reached for comment.

Chief Deputy Assessor Keith Taylor, one of two top aides to Goodwin, is running for assessor along with Lake Sherwood resident Bradley Coburn.

Coburn did not immediately return an email seeking comment.

The only candidate to file so far for Hintz's position is Assistant Treasurer-Tax Collector Sue Horgan, a former Ojai mayor and retired banker.

The winners are chosen in the June 7 primary unless no one gets more than half the vote. In that case, the top two vote-getters would face each other in the Nov. 8 general election. They would begin their four-year terms in January unless appointed early, as could be the case for the assessor's office because Goodwin may step down this summer.

Kathleen Wilson covers the Ventura County government, including the county health system, politics and social services. Reach her at kathleen.wilson@vcstar.com or 805-437-0271.