

SAULT STE. MARIE

THE SAULT STAR



Political feelers out by potential mayoral candidates

The next municipal election is Oct. 24.

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View of east exterior of Civic Centre in Sault Ste. Marie, on Saturday, May 16, 2020.. The Sault Ste. Marie Sports Hall of Fame Committee inducted Rudy Timmerman and Graham Newman into the local hall of fame via virtual conference call on Thursday afternoon. PHOTO BY BRAIN KELLY

At least a couple of councillors – and several other Saultites – are considering tossing their hat in the ring for the city's top elected position.

A municipal election is set for Oct. 24.

Mayor Christian Provenzano has repeatedly said he will not seek reelection.

Ward 3 councillors Matthew Shoemaker and Donna Hilsinger both say they are 'considering' seeking the top elected spot.

Shoemaker, a second-term city councillor, told The Sault Star that he is in the process of soliciting thoughts and opinions from others before making his decision.

"I want to determine where I can serve in the most effective position for the community," he said. "Nothing is definitive yet but I will be seeking a position on city council for the next term."

Shoemaker said he does not intend to run in the next provincial election.

"I've heard those rumours in the community but I can confirm I am not running provincially," he said.

Shoemaker said he'll make his decision for the municipal election in the next couple of months.

Shoemaker is known for penning numerous resolutions throughout both terms he's served, mainly geared towards creating cost efficiencies within the corporation, developing new products or services and creating improvements in the downtown.

Hilsinger, his first-term wardmate, has also said she's "thinking about things" but has not made any decision yet.

"I will run again but what that looks like at this time I do not know," she said.

She has not set a deadline for herself to make that decision.

Throughout her first term as a member of council Hilsinger had been a strong advocate for arts and culture, the downtown, tourism, the reduction of greenhouse gases and protecting the environment.

Others are also considering adding their name to the ballot.

Sonny Spina, who carried the Conservative banner in the last two federal elections and placed second in a neck-and-neck race for the seat against Liberal Terry Sheehan last year, has said he has received a number of calls asking him if he would run for mayor.

"It seems that the rumours are coming from everyone but me," Spina told The Sault Star.

Spina said he is currently entertaining the idea but has been very busy on the work front and hasn't given the issue the considerable focus and thought required to make a proper decision.

"I really need to properly think things through and consider the matter and I haven't had the opportunity to do that because I have been focused on other things," he said.

He too said he's not sure when he will make a decision.

A former city councillor, Ozzie Grandinetti said he's "99.9 per cent positive" he will likely file his papers and take a run for the mayor's seat.

Grandinetti served the west end as councillor between 2006-2010 and again for about a 16-month period in 2017 when a seat was vacated by Ross Romano after he won the provincial election race. Grandinetti was chosen by a draw after a deadlocked vote didn't produce a winner through council's appointment process.

"I'm not happy where this city is headed right now and things need to change," Grandinetti said.

Grandinetti said taxes continue to rise and believes that spending needs to be curbed.

"We don't need a Downtown Plaza. We have a facility at the canal district. And we see housing prices, and taxes continue to rise and I believe we have not seen any job growth in this community. We need to attract other industries and people to replace our aging population," he said.

To seek a spot on a municipal council, individuals must be eligible to vote in that municipality. Individuals must also be 18 years old, a Canadian citizen and not legally prohibited from voting. Individuals also need to obtain 25 signatures on a nomination form and pay a \$100 fee (\$200 for mayoral positions).

Nominations and registration begin May 2 and end Aug. 19.

Sault Ste. Marie's city council includes a mayor and 10 councillors – two in each of the five wards.