

HardisonInk.com

Five candidates seek two seats on Bronson Town Council



Bronson Vice Mayor Beatrice Roberts, serving as acting mayor due to the Dec. 31 resignation of Mayor Bruce Greenlee, leads the meeting Monday night (Jan. 7).

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © Jan. 8, 2019 at 9:18 a.m.

BRONSON -- After the recent resignations by former Bronson Mayor Bruce Greenlee and Town Councilwoman Katie Parks from their offices, the three remaining Bronson Town Council members -- Vice Mayor Beatrice Roberts, Town Councilman Jason Hunt and Town Councilman Robert Partin -- are currently scheduled to select the two replacements on Jan. 21.

Lacking a mayor, Vice Mayor Roberts is assigned those duties, which she exercised at the Jan. 7 meeting. Therefore, not only is she vice but she is acting mayor.

At the meeting just prior to the most recent bi-monthly Town Council meeting before, Mayor Greenlee said he was resigning effective Dec. 31 because he felt he had accomplished enough for the town and now he was going to focus on himself.

Councilwoman Parks had been questioned heatedly that night by Councilman Hunt as to whether she actually lived in the town. Parks said she was planning on getting married at the start of the year, so rather than go through a hearing to determine if she lived in the town's limits, she chose to resign.

The deadline for submission of possible candidates for the two Town Council seats is Thursday (Jan. 10); therefore, any number of qualified candidates still could apply to be chosen. If there are more candidates added, then each of them will be given an opportunity to tell the existing three-member Council why he or she believes they should be appointed by the majority of those Council members.

One situation that would cause a delay in choosing the next two Council members would be if one of the three current members failed to appear at the Jan. 21 meeting, which is slated to begin at 7 p.m. in the Dogan Cobb Municipal Building, 660 E.

HardisonInk.com

Hathaway Ave. (U.S. Alt. 27).

The term for Seat 2 on Bronson Town Council, which was formerly held by Councilwoman Parks, expires on Sept. 30 of this year. The candidate appointed by Town Council may seek reelection to the post then, if he or she desires to do so.

Current candidates for Seat 2 are James Beck, Aaron Edmondson and David White.

The term for Seat 5 on Bronson Town Council, which was formerly held by Mayor Greenlee, expires in Sept. 30, 2021. The candidate appointed by Town Council may seek reelection to the post then, if he or she desires to do so.

The person appointed to replace Greenlee does not become the mayor. After there are five Bronson Town Council members again, then that set of five will choose the mayor and vice mayor.

Current candidates for Seat 5 are Mary Tracy and Tony Berlon Weeks Jr.

Following is some information about the five candidates.

Current Seat Two Candidates



James Beck

James Beck owns the A&A Restaurant, which has been in business for 25 years in the town.

Beck said in his letter of intent that he wants to represent the community and the citizens of Bronson. He was involved with the construction of the park, now named James H. Cobb Park. He served on the sewer

committee for about three years.

While on that committee, he was part of the group who successfully applied for the time sensitive second phase of the project.

Beck said he and his family know the community well, both its strengths and its challenges.

During his verbal part of his presentation, Beck said he believes leadership and teamwork are import to have a successful Town Council that works together to make the town better.

Beck said the Town Council should want to promote Bronson so that everyone becomes involved and benefits from that involvement. As a Bronson business owner for 25 years, he has seen and appreciates customers.

HardisonInk.com

Aaron Edmondson

Aaron Edmondson said he was born and raised in the Town of Bronson.

He served previously on the Town Council for 16 years, but did not seek reelection because his job demanded too much of him at that time. Now, he is “semi-retired” and works only two days a week.

He noted that while on Council, he was among the people who helped end corruption in the municipality’s government.

Edmondson noted he was a member of the council when the park enjoyed upgrades, when the Dollar Market built its store here and when the sewer collection system was expanded adjacent to U.S. Alt. 27 for business interests.



David White



In the resume submitted as part of his application for candidacy, David White shows that he is currently working for All Florida Property Group as an asset manager, where he has served since 2017. From 2012 to 2015, he listed a job as being a non-certified

HardisonInk.com

teacher for credit retrieval with the Levy County School Board. There is no employment listed in 2016. His other jobs include working for a construction company for a year and serving as a correctional officer with the state for two years.

For community involvement, he lists serving with the Bronson Youth League from 2001 to 2010. The town government took over youth sports after the BYL repeatedly would come to Town Council with issues.

White also lists being an assistant coach for middle and high school football, basketball and baseball over a 10-year span.

During the verbal part of his presentation, he told the three current Town Council members that he has been in the construction industry for 15 to 20 years, “mostly in the water and wastewater industry.”

White said he loves the town, went to school in Bronson and endorses “steady but small growth.”

When asked by Vice Mayor Roberts what White would do to help growth, he simply stated that he noticed BubbaQue’s left and that he regretted the town’s inability to keep a chain restaurant. However, he failed to mention the Subway franchise or the Hungry Howie’s franchise that are in town.

White complained that when he shops at the Dollar Market, he sees the shelves are empty.

He also gave no answer as to how to help the town’s economy grow. He said the government may need to get “nosier” and ask business owners what is needed from the local government.

White spoke about vacant property not being rented by business interests. Vice Mayor Roberts said she believes they remain vacant due to high rent being charged.

Current Seat Five Candidates

Mary Tracy

Mary Tracy and her husband Chris moved to Bronson from Naples about 15 years ago.

She was critical of Naples for having too much traffic. Tracy said she likes the Christmas lights on the poles, which were still up that very night.

Tracy retired from being a school teacher after 40 years, with her final three years being at Williston Middle School. She worked at the Bronson branch of the United States Postal Service for five years, before retiring entirely.

Tracy said her strengths to be considered as reasons to appoint her to this position are – listening, thinking and communication.



HardisonInk.com

Tracy said she was speaking with Bronson Town Clerk Shirley Miller this morning and learned some town ordinances needed to be clarified with rewording.

Tracy conceded that unlike some candidates, she is not originally from Bronson, but in the 15 years she has been here she has experienced enough of Bronson to feel the pulse of the community.

She recognizes the positive aspects of the town as well as some things that need improvement, she said.

This candidate said she has no conflict of interest of any sort, including business interests or personal interests. Tracy said she brings no rancor (bitterness or resentment, especially when long-standing) or negativity to the council.

Being fully retired, Tracy said she can immediately begin working very hard to serve the people of Bronson, just as she has served the public throughout her professional career as a teacher and a postal clerk.



Tony Berlon Weeks Jr.

Berlon Weeks, a lifelong resident of Bronson, served seven years on the Town Council before, from October of 2007 to March of 2014.

He owns Weeks

Bail Bonds since March of 2000 to the present day. He started his apprenticeship there in 1997 before taking ownership three years later.

Weeks was the Town Council member in charge of water and sewer services during the first three years of his initial term on Town Council.

Weeks is continuing his education. He started in August of 2017 at Santa Fe College where he is learning about network infrastructure and cyber-security. He has a 4.0 grade point average and received his Comptia A+ certificate in October of 2018.

During the verbal part of his presentation, Weeks said he earned certifications from both the Basic Institute for Elected Municipal Officials and the Advanced Institute for Elected Municipal Officials of the Florida League of Cities.

He lobbied for the Florida League of Cities on behalf of Bronson in both Tallahassee and Washington, D.C.

Weeks successfully helped Bronson prove via Lidar the proper flood levels when other agencies were noting flood plains that were not correct in Bronson. He lobbied in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C., to revise what the National Flood Insurance Program was showing, which stopped the Federal Emergency Management Agency and NFIP from adding unnecessary flood insurance requirements on property owners in Bronson.

Also, on the Florida League of Cities, Weeks served on the Taxation and Finance Committee as a voting member for two years.

HardisonInk.com

“I’ve always had a love for this community,” Weeks said, “and I believe its potential is still unknown.”

Weeks said he agrees that bringing business into the town is a good idea, he stresses that it may be even more important to bring employers to the area.

Finding manufacturing interests or other employers who can pay qualified workers \$12 to \$15 an hour is a key to success in improving the local economy, he said.

The problem with Dollar General allegedly lacking enough products on its shelves, he said, is that the people of Bronson do not have money to spend there.

By creating better-paying jobs in Bronson, then people will not have to commute to Gainesville, Ocala and Crystal River to earn a living, he said.

Weeks said that when he was on Town Council, the leaders updated the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Land development regulations were brought up to date then, too, he said.

The town’s ledger was improved for accounting, he said. By the Town Council focusing on tasks that needed to be accomplished, and working through those missions, Weeks said the Town Council helped improve Bronson – including the sewer collection system along the business corridor.

Weeks conceded there were moments when he may have been too quick to speak in his first terms in office, and may have instigated some conflict. Now, he is older and wiser, he said.

Weeks said he would love an opportunity to again help the community move forward.

Weeks said he wants to work as a member of Town Council to make Bronson “a better than great place to be; not just a great place to be.”