

## HOLYOKE

# Mayoral, city council races top ballot

*By Dennis Hohenberger*

With a few weeks of campaigning left, the Nov. 2 municipal elections come into focus, with mayoral candidates Michael J. Sullivan, a city councilor at large, and Joshua A. Garcia, the town administrator for Blandford, topping the bill.

The city council races attracted more than two dozen candidates vying for at-large and ward seats.

Polls open at 7 a.m. and close at 8 p.m., followed by the results announced by City Clerk Brenna Murphy McGee at City Hall. Murphy McGee predicts a 40% or lower turnout if the Sept. 21 preliminary election was any indication.

“Past years with the mayoral races have been closer to 40%, although 2017 was only 31%” Murphy McGee said.

Less than 19% of Holyoke’s more than 27,000 registered voters cast ballots in September. The mayor’s race and open City Council seats might spur on voters. Voter registration for the upcoming election closed Oct. 13.

Murphy McGee released the early voting schedule, letting voters cast sealed ballots at City Hall Oct. 25-29 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Both mayoral candidates submitted statements.

Sullivan said rebuilding the city’s infrastructure would be a top priority, saying water and sewer resources in particular are the “building blocks” for expanding businesses, residential development and public safety.

“We cannot build a new house on a crumbling foundation, and we cannot attract businesses that will deliver jobs to our community and allow residents to build wealth for themselves and their families if we don’t have a solid foundation

supporting them,” Sullivan stated.

Sullivan asserted the city endured a decade of “broken promises and absent leadership,” resulting in residents faced with a “harsh reality” of a broken infrastructure, where fire hydrants don’t work and miles of sewer and water pipes needing replacement.

Sullivan wants to attract economic development by capitalizing on the city’s green-energy footprint, a way to bring in new industries that provide higher wages and boost living conditions for residents. He also wants to make fiber-optic internet available for residential users.

“The growth of these new industries will help lower our overall industrial tax rate, making the city even more attractive and competitive with our neighboring communities,” Sullivan stated. “This, in turn, will allow us to fund other necessary capital improvements, improve our public schools, and continue building momentum toward making our city even more attractive to industrial and residential growth.”

Garcia said he would focus on the city’s financing and pictures a “more vibrant” Holyoke with healthy neighborhoods, a safe and prosperous downtown with dining and retail, and a community that celebrates diversity.

“My vision has Holyoke becoming a destination for visitors and families as well as businesses large and small. I see us taking full advantage of our competitive position because of our exceptionally affordable green energy infrastructure and our geographical position in the region,” Garcia wrote.

Garcia wants to work with new and existing businesses to invest in Holyoke, including restoring mill buildings while keeping the city’s historical characteristics.

“I want to see Holyoke prioritize climate resilience and reduce our carbon footprint. And I see all these very achievable goals reached by a City Hall and city departments that are always open to and answerable to the citizens of this great city,” Garcia stated.

He added, “Once we have our house in order, we can properly support the departments that do the important quality-of-life work and be in a stronger

position to build and grow our vision.”

The City Council races feature open seats, including Wards 1, 2 and 4 and at-large seats open because of incumbents opting out or pursuing higher office.

At-large incumbents Howard “Howie” Greaney, James M. Leahy, Joseph M. McGiverin and Peter Tallman face challenges from Mark D. Chatel, Paola Ferraro, Kevin A. Jourdain, Jennifer M. Keitt, Jose Luis Maldonado, Tessa Murphy-Romboletti and Israel Rivera.

The following ward candidates are on the ballot:

- Ward 1: Jenny Rivera vs. Victor M. Machado
- Ward 2: Will Puello (unopposed)
- Ward 3: David Bartley (incumbent) vs. Anne N. Thalheimer
- Ward 4: Kocayne S. Givner vs Michael Thomas Siciliano
- Ward 5: Linda Vacon (incumbent) vs. Guy O’Donnell
- Ward 6: Juan Anderson- Burgos (incumbent) vs. Preston Macy
- Ward 7: Todd McGee (incumbent, unopposed)

In the School Committee race, at-large incumbent Mildred I. Lefebvre faces a challenge from Marc J. Hickey. The School Committee ward candidates are as follows:

- Ward 2: Rosalee T. Williams (incumbent, unopposed)
- Ward 3: Rebecca Birks (incumbent, unopposed)
- Ward 4: Irene Feliciano-Sims (incumbent) vs. Faizul Sibdhanny
- Ward 5: John G. Whelihan (incumbent, unopposed)
- Ward 6: William R. Collamore (incumbent, unopposed)
- Ward 7: Colleen M. Chesmore vs. Eleanor “Ellie” Wilson

