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At least 10 look to represent District 3

58 Democratic Party members to vote in special election Monday to replace late commissioner.

By April Bethea

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2/18/2002-Mug of Valerie C. Woodard, who filed with the Mecklenburg County Board of Elections Monday, Feb. 18, 2002. WENDY YANG/STAFF

The field of potential candidates lining up to succeed Mecklenburg County commissioner Valerie Woodard keeps growing. At least 10 people have submitted their names to party leaders so far.

So how will the party decide who gets the seat?

Chairman Joel Ford said local leaders have consulted both N.C. law and state party rules to outline how Monday's special election will run.

For starters, only 58 party members who live in District 3 will be allowed to participate. They include precinct officers, elected officials and other party leaders.

On Monday, that group must settle on a number of matters before they even start voting on the new representative. Among the decisions: whether to elect one or two people to fill the remaining weeks of Woodard's current term and the two-year term that begins in December. They'll also need to agree on how to handle run-off votes on Monday, and how much they'll get to hear from those wanting to be the new district representative.

And there will be plenty of people to hear from.

As of Thursday, the following have expressed interest in the open seat: Martina Ackridge, Dwayne Collins, John Crawford, Svend Deal, George Dunlap, Geneal Gregory, Deundra Maurice "Mo" Hemphill, Scott Jernigan, Rodney Moore and Joyce Davis Waddell. Other potential candidates have until Monday's election to submit their names. The party will list the name of candidates as they are submitted at www.meckdems.net.

Party members will vote by ballot. Elected leaders and committee members who aren't precinct officials get one vote each. But the party also offers a weighted system, with precinct officials receiving more votes based on how many people in the precinct voted for Democratic Gov. Mike Easley in 2004.

A candidate must receive a majority of votes to be elected. If no majority is reached on the first vote, the party will drop the lowest vote-getter from subsequent votes. Ford said party officials will debate whether to remove more than one candidate if there are multiple votes.

The nominee for the two-year term will be submitted to the county Board of Elections office for final approval. Their name won't appear on the Nov. 4 ballot, but they'll receive any votes cast for Woodard.

The special election is set for 7:30 p.m. Monday at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center.



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