

NEWS

West Melbourne Councilman John Dittmore files for County Commission seat



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Florida Today

Published 5:11 a.m. ET March 23, 2023

Current West Melbourne City Council member John Dittmore filed his paperwork Wednesday to run for the District 3 Brevard County Commission seat that will open next year.

The Republican becomes the first candidate to file for the open position even as the open races for Districts 1 and 5 have begun to fill with 2024 hopefuls.

Dittmore, a 10-year Brevard County resident, retired police officer and Navy veteran, has served on the West Melbourne City Council since 2018. If he wins the seat for District 3 next November, he will be leaving his term with the city early.

In a phone interview with FLORIDA TODAY, Dittmore said he believes he will be able to have a greater impact on bigger issues for residents in his city and district as a member of the County Commission.

Issues like plugging gaps in fire rescue and providing better services to the entire county and shoring up protections by the Melbourne-Tillman Water Control District are among his biggest priorities. The district was created by the state legislature a century ago "for the purpose of providing a water management system to prevent damage from flooding, erosion, and excessive drainage." Currently the city of West Melbourne appoints one person to its board while Brevard County and Palm Bay are each granted three appointees each.

"Funding them properly can prevent and reduce the risk of flooding in the future," Dittmore said. "I don't believe they are funded adequately to meet the needs of the community. Some of their equipment is old and dilapidated and not working properly. I want to make sure that we can get that to them, because if not, we're going to have major flooding events and they won't be able to keep up with the needs." "I'm not seeing that right now because frankly there's been a lot of excuses from the county and that needs to change," Dittmore added.

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Dittmore also emphasized his desire to continue the county's work on the Indian River Lagoon, saying he believes the waterway should be in much better condition than it currently is given the resources and investment that have been dedicated to its rehabilitation.

No other candidates have yet filed for the District 3 seat, positioning Dittmore as the lone early contender to take over for current commissioner John Tobia, who cannot run again due to term limits. Tobia will be running for Brevard County Supervisor of Elections against the current office-holder Tim Bobanic, who was appointed to the job by Gov. Ron DeSantis last year after former supervisor Lori Scott retired early.

Brevard County Commissioners serve four-year terms and make an annual salary of \$60,272.98. County Commission races are staggered; Districts 2 and 4 held their races in 2022.

Democrat Vinnie Taranto, and Republicans Thad Altman and David Neuman have announced plans to run for South Brevard's District 5 seat.

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