

## Lack of candidates leads Lone Tree to cancel election...again



Lone Tree has canceled nearly all its elections for city council seats in recent years due to a lack of candidates. [By Jeffrey Beall - Own work, CC BY 3.0](#)



*By Mike McKibbin/NewsBreak Denver | March 21, 2022*

**[LONE TREE, CO]** For the third time in the last six years, Lone Tree voters will not cast ballots in this year's May 3 city council election.

The city canceled this year's election due to uncontested races in Districts 1 and 2. That means only one of the city's four city council members and the mayor faced an opponent since 2016.

Councilmember Mike Anderson keeps his District 1 seat after serving the past four years. He is the only council member to face a challenger since 2016.

Councilmember Jay Carpenter did not seek re-election for his District 2 seat. Appointed to serve the last two years of a council vacancy in 2016, Carpenter ran unopposed in 2018. He decided not to run again this year to spend more quality time with his family.

Carpenter also noted the position requires a "pretty significant time commitment."

Carpenter served on a city commission when he applied for the vacancy in 2016. After the interview process, the council chose him from five candidates.

### **No controversies**

Carpenter thinks the lack of contested races over the years shows residents believe the city runs smoothly.

"If we had any controversy, I'm sure we'd see candidates with different platforms," he said. "But it is kind of surprising more people don't step up. When we have vacancies on our commissions, we always get a lot of high-quality applicants."

Marissa Harmon will replace Carpenter. Her daughter won a "mayor-for-a-day" contest at school three years ago, and Harmon tagged along.

"The mayor, Jackie Millet, urged me to apply for a planning commission vacancy, and I was appointed," Harmon said. "I got to know how that works and knew I wanted to be on the council. So when Jay Carpenter decided to not run again, I threw my hat in the ring. I was surprised no one else stepped forward."

Harmon said no single issue drew her to run, although she noted that plans call for Lone Tree to double in size in the next 10-15 years.

"I want to make sure we maintain our high standard of living," she added.

Anderson and Harmon will take their oaths of office on May 17.

## **Six Year History of Lone Tree City Council Races**

### 2016

Mayor: Jacqueline Millet (Cancelled, uncontested)

District 1: Wynne Shaw (Cancelled, uncontested)

District 2: Cathie Brunnick (now Frazzini) (Cancelled, uncontested)

District 1: Jay Carpenter (Appointed to fill vacancy when Millet elected mayor)

### 2018

District 1: Jay Carpenter (Uncontested)

District 2: Mike Anderson (Contested)

### 2020

Mayor: Jacqueline Millet (Cancelled, uncontested)

District 1: Wynne Shaw (Cancelled, uncontested)

District 2: Cathie Brunnick (now Frazzini) (Cancelled, uncontested)

### 2022

District 1: Marissa Harmon (Cancelled, uncontested)

District 2: Mike Anderson (Cancelled, uncontested)

Source: City of Lone Tree

Lone Tree City Council consists of four elected members and a mayor. Each serves a staggered, four-year term and represents one of two districts, except for the mayor, who serves as an at-large member. Mayor and council members are limited to no more than two consecutive terms or eight consecutive years.

Among council members, Millet, Wynne Shaw, and Cathie Frazzini have been uncontested in two elections and will be term-limited in 2024.

### **Local candidates lacking across Colorado**

A lack of municipal candidates is not new in Colorado, according to Rob Preuhs, professor and chair of political science at Metropolitan State University of Denver.

He said there could be several reasons municipal elections fail to attract candidates.

"They're (often) held in what are called 'off-years,' when there isn't a presidential election that attracts attention," Preuhs added. "The 2020 election was very contentious, and that turns some people off. The pandemic could be something else."

The Colorado Municipal League said of the 172 regular local elections scheduled in the spring of even-numbered years; cities canceled at least 72 this year. That compares to 70 in 2020, 63 in 2018, 70 in 2016 and 74 in 2014.

According to city spokesman Nate Jones, Lone Tree held an orientation for all interested potential candidates in January.

In other Douglas County municipalities, Larkspur's April 5 municipal election features a lengthy ballot with several issues. However, the town has uncontested races for mayor and five people for five town council seats.

Castle Rock and Parker will hold their municipal elections on November 8. Castle Pines' next election is in November 2023.