

Saturday, September 28, 2024

Rhett Pierce, Cape Girardeau City Council member for Ward 5, has submitted his resignation from the City Council. Mr. Pierce was arrested last Friday on charges of Unlawful Possession of a Firearm and Drug Trafficking. City officials cannot comment on those pending legal issues for Mr. Pierce, but there have understandably been a lot of questions from the community, especially on the process moving forward to fill the Ward 5 seat.

The City of Cape municipal government acts in accordance with our City Charter, which can be found on the city website at ["cityofcape.org/law"](http://cityofcape.org/law). In Article III, Section 3.07 of the City Charter, language dictates how the City Council handles any vacancies or forfeiture of office that may occur, and how to fill those vacancies. It states:

A vacancy in the council or in the office of mayor shall be filled by the council for a period running until a special election can be held to fill the vacancy for the balance of the unexpired term, or until the normal expiration date for that term, whichever occurs first. The council shall fill said vacancy within sixty (60) days after the date of its occurrence. Any council member so appointed must have been a resident of that member's ward for a period of time not less than ninety (90) days immediately prior to the occurrence of the vacancy. For the purpose of filling vacancies, the requirement for a quorum, as provided in section 3.13 of this article, shall govern only if sufficient members remain on the council.

Additionally, any candidate applying must be at least 21 years of age and a registered voter as required in Article III, Section 3.02 of the City Charter. To meet the 90 day residency requirement, applicants must have been a resident of Ward 5 since July 9, 2024.

The City Council will fill the vacant Ward 5 seat at the next regular meeting of the City Council on Monday October 7, by a majority vote. This appointed council member will serve on the City Council until the next special election for the seat, in April 2025. Residents of Ward 5 interested in serving in this appointed seat must come to City Hall to pick up an application. Proof of 90 day residency in Ward 5 is required, and the application and a financial disclosure form must be submitted to City Clerk Gayle Conrad by 3pm on Friday October 4th.

Seeing criminal charges brought against any elected official can be disheartening and cause a loss of trust from the community towards its government. It is important for me to stress that the City of Cape municipal government is dedicated to operating under local, state, and federal law. Our staff and elected officials are expected to strive towards the ideals put forth in our founding documents, with a strong moral compass and a sense of duty to protect and serve our citizens. We do this best while partnering with the public, so please don't hesitate to engage in productive, direct communication with the City Council and city administration.