

Historic Midterm

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the time. Bailey later defended Smith on social media.

“Wasn’t an issue when I ran but people are attacking @LorettaSmithPPDX now. Double Standard? The race should be about issues,” Bailey tweeted in December.

Smith said her top priorities if elected would be to push for more affordable housing, assisting the poor, and continuing funding for a summer job programs she started for local youth to help kids of color and other disadvantaged populations.

She also wants to give more attention to the populous in outer east Portland, a group that makes up a higher proportion of low income people and people of color than the citywide average.

Andrea Valderrama, another diverse candidate who is of Peruvian descent, joined the election race in October. A former staffer of former Commissioner Steve Novick and current advisor to Mayor Ted Wheeler, she is also a member of the David Douglas School Board. The school district serves a 12 square mile perimeter in southeast Portland east of I-205, where Valderrama has worked on resolutions to make local schools more inclusive and welcoming for immigrants, and expand students’ access to contraception.

Sharon Maxwell, a successful construction business owner of over 25 years, is one of the four candidates of color running to take Smith’s seat on the Multnomah County Commission where term limits prevent Smith from running again.

The District 2 post represents people from 34 neighborhoods in north and northeast Portland, extending to the northernmost parts of north Portland in St. Johns to as

far east as 185th Avenue.

Among the many issues Maxwell plans to tackle if elected are the auditing of services like mental health, public safety, and public health to ensure that crisis prevention is taking place.

Maxwell also cited economic stability and affordable housing for families as top priorities.

“My approach as commissioner will be to make sure that we’re focusing on stabilizing and strengthening our families because we’ll put the vestment up front that’s focused on prevention. Wanting to make sure that first of all our families are economically stable and sustainable; that parents have the ability to get into employment opportunities that will provide them with the financial stability,” she told the Portland Observer.

Maxwell previously ran for city council in 2014 but lost to incumbent Nick Fish. She holds two bachelor’s degrees, a master’s in business administration, and started two non-profits in the 2000s—one was a transitional and emergency housing shelter for the homeless, and another connected youth to environmentally friendly jobs.

Maxwell is running against Susheela Jayapal, an activist and former Adidas America general counsel; Maria Garcia, a small business owner of a coffee shop in southwest Portland and endorsed by activist group Women’s March on Portland; and Bruce Broussard, a public access TV talk show host and former restaurant manager who has ran half a dozen times for multiple posts in the past two decades. All candidates for the seat are people of color.

Diversity consultant D. Bora Harris also appears on ballots this year as a candidate for Multnomah County Chair, looking to unseat current chair Deborah Kafoury.

Harris told the Portland Observer that she’s running on a campaign to thwart institutional racism and improve county employees’ working conditions.

Citing public spats that have occurred among the county chair and commissioners in the past, Harris advocates for setting aside differences to get things done and listening to what the people’s needs are.

“The commissioners and chairs appear to have personal issues among themselves and when you’re so focused on your personal issues and disagreements, you’re losing sight of the needs of the community, the elderly, the children, the homeless, affordable housing,” Harris said.

If she wins, she’d be the first African American woman to serve as county chair in 25 years since Gladys McCoy first served in the 1980s.

The outstanding number of female people of color running for local elections follows in a nationwide trend of underrepresented groups putting their hats in the political ring this year.

A record breaking number of women have registered as candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives in the midterms this year, according to data from Rut-



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