
Conrad poised to take Memphis City Council seat

By Michael Lollar

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Kemp Conrad, former chairman of the Shelby County Republican Party, is looking forward to voting for relaxed residency requirements for police recruits in his first vote as a City Council member.

Conrad's lead slowly widened Tuesday to more than a 10 percent margin over his nearest rival, Democrat Paul Shaffer, for the Super District 9, Position 1 seat. The winner replaces former Councilman Scott McCormick, who left the council to become executive director of the Plough Foundation.

Shaffer, business manager of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 47, had hoped for a big turnout of Barack Obama voters to boost his chances. He got his wish, but vote totals reflected a different demographic at work in the sprawling district. It covers roughly the northern half of the city from North Memphis to Raleigh and Cordova into Hickory Hill and East Memphis.

With 96 of 114 precincts counted, Conrad had 42 percent of the vote, and Shaffer, who had 32 percent, called Conrad to concede.

Willingham, former Shelby County commissioner and mayoral candidate, garnered 20 percent of the vote. He helped turn the nonpartisan race into a sort of family feud.

Short of winning, Willingham said he wanted to take votes from his fellow Republican. "I don't like him," he said, disgruntled by Conrad's former GOP stewardship.

Conrad said, "That's his right and his reputation. He's got to make his bed and live with that. If you're in politics and hold grudges then you're probably in the wrong arena."

Arnett Montague III trailed the other candidates with less than 5 percent of the vote.

Conrad said relaxing the police residency requirement will be on the agenda when he takes office. "We need more boots on the ground, and I'll support it."

Of his election, he added: "It's incredible to be elected my first time at the same time an African-American is elected president. It's a night I'll never forget. It's obviously a very special night."



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