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Mayor/City Council Elections, 1962-1982

Houseal, Willie H.

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Mayor/City Council Elections
1962-1982

I. Election of 1962

Democratic Candidates

For Mayor: Maxwell Oliver

City Council: W. H. Warwick
W. O. Bassford
Tom Young
J. Charlton Greene
N. N. Langdale, Sr.
Harry Mixson

For Board of Education: Mrs. Jackie Harris
Eddie Laws
J. L. Newbern, Jr.

Republican Candidates

City Council: Ed Barham
Charlie Barnes
Jimmy Decesare
Gretchen McCoy
Lucins Wilson
J. C. Woodward, Jr.

Interest in this particular election was high because the Republican Party offered six candidates for the six council positions. The Republican Party was challenging the century-old Democratic reign on city politics. The major issue was whether Valdosta had prospered under Democratic control. All of the Democratic candidates were victorious in the election. There were no Black candidates in this election.

II. Election of 1964

Victorious Candidates

Mayor: Richard Stewart

Council Post 1: W. O. Bassford
Council Post 2: H. B. Ross
Council Post 3: A. D. Crosby
Council Post 4: William Keller
Council Post 5: William Carroll
Council Post 6: J. C. Woodward

Board of Education Post 1: Christie Patterson
Board of Education Post 2: J. Ralph Thaxton
Board of Education Post 3: Reuben Yancey

There were not any Black candidates in this election.

The only issues involved in this campaign were the charges that the mayoral candidates leveled against each other. Richard Stewart accused Emory Bass of overspending city income by \$200,000 during his administration (1956-58). Emory Bass accused Maxwell Oliver, the outgoing mayor, charged water users twice the one third (1/3) rate increase.

III. Election of 1966

Victorious Candidates

Mayor: James Beck

Council Post 1: W. O. Bassford
Council Post 2: H. B. Ross
Council Post 3: Carl Minchew
Council Post 4: Bill Keller
Council Post 5: J. Charlton Greene
Council Post 6: J. C. Woodward, Jr.

Board of Education Post 4: Bob Quattlebaum
Board of Education Post 5: John Howell
Board of Education Post 6: I. H. Tillman, Jr.

This election was the first time Black poll workers were used in city elections. This was also the first time that a Black had sought political office in Valdosta during modern times. Mr. John T. Fisher, Jr., a Black teacher, ran against Mr. J. C. Woodward, Jr. for city Council Post 6. Fisher received 1,157 votes. Woodward received 3,490 votes. Woodward got more votes than anyone else in a contested race.

IV. Election of 1968

Victorious Candidates

Mayor: James Beck

Council Post 1: W. O. Bassford
Council Post 2: Ashley Hill
Council Post 3: Carl Minchew
Council Post 4: Bill Keller
Council Post 5: Fred Bonner
Council Post 6: J. C. Woodward

Board of Education Post 7: Mrs. Veran Blackburn
Board of Education Post 8: Gordon Southwell
Board of Education Post 9: J. L. Newbern

John T. Fisher and Henry L. White, both of whom were Black, ran against Eugene Eager, Wayne Ellerbee, Ashley Hill, and H. G. Moore for Council Post 2. Neither Fisher nor White made the run-off election.

Woodrow Harris, a Black man, ran against W. F. Cunningham, Gil Harbin, and Carl Minchew for Council Post 3. Mr. Harris did not make the run-off election.

Rev. T. Reid Lawrence, a Black man, ran against Mrs. Veran Blackburn and Carolyn Puckett for Board of Education Post 7. Mrs. Blackburn won without a run-off.

Rev. W. H. Hall, a Black man, ran against William Eanes and Gordon Southwell for Board of Education Post 8. Mr. Southwell won without a run-off.

V. Election of 1970

Victorious Candidates

Mayor: Aubrey Stump

Council Post 1: W. O. Bassford
Council Post 2: Ashley Hill
Council Post 3: Gil Harbin
Council Post 4: Bill Keller
Council Post 5: Fred Bonner
Council Post 6: Charles Norris

Board of Education Post 1: Hulyn Smith
Board of Education Post 2: Stan Bishop
Board of Education Post 3: Reuben Yancey

The issues of this election centered around the condition of city streets and parks, recreation, the municipal airport, and the salaries of policemen and firemen.

Woodrow Harris, a Black man, ran against Gil Harbin for Council Post 3. Harbin received 2,853 votes, and Harris received 1,102 votes.

Alvin Payton, a Black man, ran against Bill Keller for Council Post 4. Keller received 2,860 votes, and Payton received 1,026.

Ralph Harrington, a Black man, ran against Fred Bonner for Council Post 5. Bonner received 3,045 votes, and Harrington received 1,018 votes. T. B. Bovan, a Black man, ran against Charles Norris, Ernest Nijem, and Dave Masingill for Council Post 6. Norris, who received 1,786 votes, and Nijem, who received 1,230 votes, made it to the run-off. Masingill received 571 votes, and Bovan received 414 votes.

W. H. Hall, a Black minister, ran against Hulyn Smith for Board of Education Post 1. Smith received 2,889 votes, and Hall received 935 votes.

Dr. Lafayette W. Williams, a Black dentist, ran against Stanley Bishop. Bishop received 2,727 votes, and Williams received 1,265 votes.

VI. Election of 1972

Victorious Candidates

Mayor: James Beck

Council Post 1: Bette Bechtel
Council Post 2: Ashley Hill
Council Post 3: Gil Harbin
Council Post 4: Lamar Culbreath
Council Post 5: Fred Bonner
Council Post 6: Charles Norris

Board of Education Post 4: Dr. Robert Quattlebaum
Board of Education Post 5: W. M. Eanes
Board of Education Post 6: Dr. Glenn Herrin

The issues for this election centered around the city budget and the consolidation of city/county government.

Mr. John Fisher, a Black man, ran against Bette Bechtel, Ernest Nijem, Dr. Don Gerlock, and Dave Masingill for Council Post 1. Fisher received 1,102 votes, and Bechtel received 1,689 votes. Nijem received 1,008 votes, and Masingill received 488 votes. Fisher and Bechtel were in a run-off. Bechtel won.

Alvin Payton, a Black man, ran against Charles Norris, Leland J. Kent, and Doris Vaughn for Council Post 6. Payton received 1,639 votes, and Norris received 1,491 votes. Kent received 1,286 votes and Vaughn received 450 votes. Payton and Norris were in a run-off. Norris won.

Dr. L. W. Williams, a Black man, ran against W. M. Eanes and Jud Godwin for Board of Education Post 5. Williams received 1,623 votes, and Eanes received 1,563 votes. Godwin received 1,470 votes. Williams and Eanes were in a run-off. Eanes won.

VII. Election of 1974

Victorious Candidates

Mayor: Gil Harbin

Council Post 1: Bette Betchel
Council Post 2: Ashley Hill
Council Post 3: Ruth Council
Council Post 4: Lamar Culbreth
Council Post 5: John Henry May
Council Post 6: Ernest Nijem

Board of Education Post 7: Joella Blackburn
Board of Education Post 8: Dr. Joe Crane
Board of Education Post 9: Lamar Newbern

Ms. Ruth Council, a Black female, ran against three white males for Council Post 3. Ms. Council received 52.2% of the vote. Obviously, she won without a run-off.

(Two other Black persons ran for council positions. I could not find their names. Needless to say, they were unsuccessful.)

Dr. L. W. Williams, a Black man, made it to the run-off with Dr. Joe Crane over Board of Education Post 8. Crane won with 61.9% of the vote. Williams received 38% of the vote.

Not one Black person had ever been elected to the Board of Education up to this point. However, Claydon Barron, a Black man, had been appointed to fill the unexpired term of Reuben Yancey, who resigned in 1972.

The big issue in the mayor's race was whether land adjacent to Valdosta State College should be transferred to the state.

VIII. Election of 1976

Victorious Candidates

Mayor: Gil Harbin

Council Post 1: Bette Bechtel
Council Post 3: Ruth Council
Council Post 5: John Henry May

Board of Education Post 1: Hulyn Smith
Board of Education Post 2: Stan Bishop
Board of Education Post 3: Dr. John Ricks

Ruth Council, a Black female, ran against Dave Masingill and T. R. Humphrey for Council Post 3. Ms. Council won with 67% of the vote. Masingill received 23% and Humphrey received 9.8% of the vote.

Ralph Hart, a Black businessman, ran against Bette Bechtel and Herbert Ross for Council Post 1. Hart received 34.4% of the vote, and Bechtel received 39.7% of the vote. Ross received 9.8% of the vote. Hart lost the run-off to Bechtel, who got 59.8% of the vote.

L. W. Williams, a Black male, ran against Cora Howell, a retired Black teacher, and Stan Bishop for Board of Education Post 2. Williams received 13.4% of the vote. Howell received 39.3% of the vote, and Bishop received 47.1% of the vote. In the run-off, Howell lost to Bishop, who received 55.1% of the vote.

Claydon Barron, the Black appointed member of the Board of Education, ran against John Ricks and Mike Stouffer Board of Education Post 3. Barron received 48.4% of the vote. Ricks received 26.6% of the vote, and Stouffer received 24.9% of the vote. Barron lost in the run-off to Ricks by 13 votes.

IX. Election of 1978

Victorious Candidates

Mayor: Gil Harbin

Council Post 2: Ashley Hill
Council Post 4: I. H. Tillman
Council Post 6: Ernest Nijem

Board of Education Post 4: Dr. Robert Quattlebaum
Board of Education Post 5: Claydon Barron
Board of Education Post 6: David Waller

Joe Brown, a Black man, ran against David Waller and Glen Herrin for Board of Education Post 6. Brown received 26% of the vote. Waller received 56% of the vote, and Herrin received 17% of the vote.

Claydon Barron, a Black, ran unopposed for Board of Education Post 5.

The issues in the mayoral race centered around attracting industry to Valdosta and the using of sales tax revenue to reduce property taxes by the same amount.

X. Election of 1980

Victorious Candidates

Mayor: Ernest Nijem

Council Post 1: Harold Bennett
Council Post 3: William Eanes
Council Post 5: Gill Autrey
Council Post 6: Gene Greneker

Willie Ross, a Black man, ran against Ernest Nijem, Dorothy Brown, and Jack May for major. Ross received 807 votes. Brown received 405 votes. Nijem received

2,616 votes, and May received 1,627 votes. Nijem and May faced each other in a run-off.

Thelma Branham, a Black female, ran against Harold Bennett, Redden Hart, and Norman Nichols for Council Post 1. Branham received 1,383 votes. Hart received 380 votes. Bennett received 1,928 votes, and Nichols received 1,517 votes. Bennett and Nichols faced each other in a run-off.

William Pompey, a Black man, ran against Frederick Bell, William Eanes, David Masingill, and Jerry Reaves for Council Post 3. Pompey received 2,012 votes, and Eanes received 1,849 votes. Bell received 216 votes, and Reaves received 700 votes. Pompey lost in the run-off to Eanes; Pompey received 2,475 votes, and Eanes received 2,485 votes.

Herbert Williams, a Black man, ran against Vivian Jones, Stan Tedders, and Gene Greneker for Council Post 6. Williams received 1,309 votes, and Jones received 577 votes. Greneker received 1,908 votes, and Tedders received 1,385 votes. Greneker defeated Tedders in the run-off.

XI. Election of 1982

Victorious Candidates

Mayor: Ernest Nijem

Council Post 2: Ashley Hill

Council Post 4: I. H. "Bubber" Tillman

Council Post 6: Jo Ann Hartman

Board of Education Post 1: Mary B. Allen

Board of Education Post 2: Steve Bishop

Board of Education Post 3: Dr. William Grow

Major issue in council race was efficiency of police and fire departments. Candidates for Board Education were concerned about corporal punishment.