

Municipal Election Information Sheet

In this year's November General Election, Bella Vista will have three alderman seats up for election:

Ward 1, Position 1 — Currently held by Becky Morgan

Ward 2, Position 1 — Currently held by Jim Wozniak

Ward 3, Position 1 — Currently held by Allen King

About the city

- Bella Vista is a city of the first class, and operates under a mayor-council form of government.
- Bella Vista was incorporated as a city during the 2006 General Election, and started its first year as a city in Jan. 2007.
- The current population of Bella Vista is 27,642. The city spans 47-square-miles with more than 550 miles of roads.
- The City of Bella Vista provides services to residents including police and fire protection, street repair and maintenance, community and economic development and a public library. The city also contracts with Republic Services for residential and commercial solid waste removal.
- The City of Bella Vista does not have a parks and recreation department. Those services in city limits are offered to members of the Bella Vista Village Property Owners Association at POA facilities.
- The City of Bella Vista is primarily funded by taxpayer dollars.

What does it mean to be an alderman in Bella Vista?

The City Council is the governing body of the city, made up of six members. The job of a City Council member, or alderman, is to discuss and vote on legislation the city government follows and actions the city takes, apart from what is already regulated by the state. These items include, but are not limited to:

- Reviewing and approving the city's annual budget
- Regulating the use of public funds
- Establishing tax rates
- Entering into legal contracts
- Borrowing funds
- Passing city ordinances and resolutions
- Regulating land use through zoning rules
- Regulating public health and safety
- Exercising the power of eminent domain
- Communicating policies with residents
- Responding to constituent needs and concerns

- Serving on various committees
- Representing the city to other levels of government

City Council members must meet regularly, at least once per month. In Bella Vista, City Council work sessions — public meetings meant for discussion only and at which no action can take place — are held at **5:30 p.m. on the third Monday of each month**. The regular meetings — public meetings at which votes are cast — are held at **6:30 p.m. on the fourth Monday of each month**. Special meetings can be called as need arises, with appropriate public notification. Meetings follow Roberts Rules of Order.

All meetings of the City Council and any other meetings of two or more of its members are subject to the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act.

In Bella Vista, City Council members are currently paid \$5,640 annually. This figure, along with the mayor's salary, is set by resolution annually, no later than July 1.

City Council members serve 4-year staggered terms. That means this year three are up for election, and those three will service through 2020. In two years (2018) the other three remaining seats will be up for election, to serve 4-year terms through 2022.

What is the time commitment for serving as an alderman?

The time commitment of a City Council member is what each member makes it, outside of the required meeting times. However, as an elected official, a City Council member's duty is to the public citizens who voted that person into office, and that City Council member represents the residents of Bella Vista. The aldermen don't have a "boss," but rather answer to the public who voted them into office.

Here is the typical process:

1. Each council member is sent an agenda packet for each work session on Thursday, four days prior to the meeting. This packet is also made available to the public.
2. Aldermen are responsible for reading their packets thoroughly before the work session. If they have questions about any agenda item, they are responsible for setting up meetings with other city officials, such as the mayor, staff attorney, police or fire chief, to address these questions before the meeting time.
3. Agenda items are discussed in detail at work sessions. Department heads are typically present at these meetings to answer questions and provide additional information. No action can be taken at a work session, and public comments are not allowed. Aldermen may request changes to ordinances and resolutions that are before them.
4. Later that week, on Thursday — four days prior to the regular meeting — revised agenda packets are sent out to aldermen and the public.
5. Aldermen are responsible for these packets the same as the work session packets.
6. Agenda items are discussed and voted on at regular meetings. Any changes to proposed ordinances or resolutions must also be voted on. Regular meetings allow for public comment at the start of the meeting but not during the time aldermen are discussing or voting on agenda items.

Who can run for office?

In order to run for municipal office, a candidate must:

- Be a qualified elector — at least 18 years of age and a U.S. citizen
- Be an Arkansas resident
- Live in the jurisdiction to be represented at the time of filing for office and throughout elected term
- Be lawfully registered to vote
- Never have been convicted of embezzlement of public money, bribery, forgery or other infamous crimes

Candidates may only run for one state, county or municipal office if the elections are held on the same date.

How do candidates file to run for office?

Candidates must collect a petition signed by not fewer than 30 electors of the ward or city in which the election will be held. Candidates may begin circulating petitions **Saturday, May 21**.

Candidates must file this petition, along with a political practices pledge and affidavit of eligibility, with the Benton County Clerk during the official filing period: **Noon July 29 through noon Aug. 19**.

For more information on running for municipal office in Benton County, see the Benton County Clerk website at

<http://www.bentoncountyar.gov> or the Public Office

Handbook at

<http://www.bentoncountyar.gov/Media/Document/CountyClerk/Public-Office-Handbook.pdf>.