



# Elections 2012

The City of Gardendale will hold elections for mayor and city council on August 28, 2012. Runoff elections, if necessary, will be held on October 9<sup>th</sup>. The four-year term of office for the successful candidates will begin on November 5<sup>th</sup>. We hope the following information, presented in a simple question-and-answer format, will answer the most common questions that citizens and candidates may have about the upcoming elections.

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## Candidate Information

### **What are the duties of the mayor and city council members?**

The mayor serves as the head of the executive branch of municipal government. As such, the mayor is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the municipality. For example, he or she oversees municipal employees, makes sure that bills are paid on time, signs municipal contracts and, in general, performs many of the same functions as a CEO of a private corporation.

The city council is the legislative branch of the city and has authority over the finances and property of the municipality. The council establishes policies, passes ordinances, determines what sorts of services the municipality will offer, and has authority over all other legislative aspects of municipal government. The Gardendale city council consists of five members elected from the city's five districts.

### **What's a "district?"**

A district is a specific geographic area of the city. The city is divided into five districts, and the citizens of each district elect a candidate to represent them on the council. Maps of the City's districts may be viewed by visiting the "Maps" page on the City's website: [www.cityofgardendale.com](http://www.cityofgardendale.com).

**What are the qualifications to run for mayor or city council?**

All candidates must have been a city resident for at least ninety days preceding the election and must be a registered voter. Candidates for city council must have been a resident of the district from which they wish to be elected for at least ninety days preceding the election.

**Does it cost anything to become a candidate?**

There is a \$50 qualifying fee to become a candidate. This fee must be paid when the candidates submit their Statement of Candidacy. However, the qualifying fee is waived for candidates who submit a signed affidavit stating they are financially unable to pay the fee. Any candidate who changes the position for which he or she qualifies, and any candidate who withdraws and subsequently re-qualifies, must pay the qualification fee for each such change or re-qualification.

**Is the mayor's position considered full-time? How about the council members?**

The mayor's position became full-time effective with the term of office that began in November 2008. The council member positions are not full-time.

**How much are the mayor and council members paid for their service?**

The annual salary of the mayor is \$57,000. Effective with the term of office that begins in November 2012, the City of Gardendale's council meetings will no longer be presided over by the mayor but will instead be presided over by a city council president. The annual salary of the council member serving as council president will be \$15,000; the annual salary of the council member serving as council president pro tempore will be \$12,600; and the annual salary of the remaining three council members will be \$12,000. In addition, the mayor and council members shall, if they desire on their individual basis, be afforded all benefits available to the full-time employees of the City, as permitted by law.

**When can I sign up to run for office? What do I have to do to become a candidate?**

Candidates may qualify to run for office between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, beginning on Tuesday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, and ending on Tuesday, July 17<sup>th</sup>. (Please note that candidates will not be able to qualify on Friday, July 4<sup>th</sup>, due to the Independence Day holiday.) Candidates must meet with the city clerk at City Hall and submit the required documents and qualifying fee (unless it is waived as described above) in order to become a candidate. City Hall is located at 970 Main Street, which is at the intersection of Main Street and Fieldstown Road. The required documents consist of a Statement of Candidacy and a Statement of Economic Interests, commonly known as an "ethics form." The city clerk is

required by law to forward each candidate's Statement of Economic Interests to the Secretary of State's office in Montgomery where it becomes a public record.

Although not required, candidates are encouraged to make an appointment in advance with the city clerk to submit the qualifying papers and to review a packet of information that he provides to each candidate. This typically takes about thirty minutes. The city clerk's phone number is (205) 631-8789, and his e-mail address is [cityclerk@cityofgardendale.com](mailto:cityclerk@cityofgardendale.com).

## Voter & Polling Information

### **When and where will the elections be held?**

The elections will be held on Tuesday, August 28<sup>th</sup>. Runoff elections, if necessary, will be held on Tuesday, October 9<sup>th</sup>. Polling hours will be 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. The elections will be held at the Gardendale Civic Center, 857 Main Street, which is located across the street from Gardendale High School.

### **What's a runoff election?**

A runoff election is necessary when there are more than two candidates in a given race and none of them receive more than fifty percent of the votes. When this occurs, a runoff election is then held between the top two candidates to determine the winner. (Example: If on August 28<sup>th</sup>, Candidate A receives 40 percent of the votes, Candidate B receives 10 percent, Candidate C receives 30 percent, and Candidate D receives 20 percent, then a runoff election will be held on October 9<sup>th</sup> between Candidate A and Candidate C.)

If the mayoral election results in a runoff, then all voters in the city will vote in the runoff on October 9<sup>th</sup> to determine the winner. On the other hand, if the only election(s) that result in a runoff are city council election(s), then only the voters in the affected district(s) will vote again on October 9<sup>th</sup>.

### **Who may vote in the City of Gardendale elections?**

In order to vote in the upcoming elections, you must have been a resident of the city for at least thirty days preceding the election and you must be registered to vote. Voter registration is handled by the Jefferson County Board of Registrars. Forms are available at the Gardendale - Martha Moore Public Library (205-631-6639) if you wish to update your registration status; for example, if you recently moved to Gardendale, if you moved from one district to another district within the city, or if your name has changed. These forms are available at the library as a courtesy and convenience to the citizens, but only the Board of Registrars is authorized to answer questions regarding voter registration. If you have any questions about your registration status, please contact the Board of Registrars (205-325-5550).

**I'll be out of town on election day. Will I be able to vote an absentee ballot?**

Yes. In fact, there are six reasons for voting an absentee ballot: (1) The voter will be out of the city on election day; (2) The voter has a physical illness or infirmity which prevents him or her from voting at the polls; (3) The voter works a shift which has at least ten hours which coincide with the hours the polls are open at his or her regular polling place; (4) The voter is enrolled as a student at an educational institution located outside the county of his or her personal residence, and the attendance at which prevents him or her from voting at the polls; (5) The voter is a member of, or spouse or dependent of, a member of the Armed Forces of the United States or is similarly qualified to vote absentee pursuant to the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act; (6) The voter has been appointed as a poll worker or poll watcher at a polling place other than his or her regular polling place. (Reason #6 does not apply to the city elections because all voting will be held at the Civic Center, as stated above.) If you believe you satisfy one of these requirements and wish to vote an absentee ballot, please contact the city clerk, (205) 631-8789, for additional information.

**Will I be able to vote if I have a disability or other special need?**

Absolutely. A special device will be provided that allows voters with disabilities and other special needs to mark their ballot privately and independently. This device also provides language assistance to voters who are more comfortable speaking a different language or who need help to better understand written instructions.

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**Need more information?**

If you would like to know more about the upcoming elections, please feel free to contact Gardendale City Clerk Keith Mosley by calling (205) 631-8789 or by email at [cityclerk@cityofgardendale.com](mailto:cityclerk@cityofgardendale.com).