

## Candidates File for Mayor, City Council, Municipal Judge Early Voting Begins February 14; Election Day is March 6



*Ten residents filed for the positions of Mayor, City Council and Municipal Judge on Filing Day, January 9. Candidates include (top, left to right) Cynthia Atencio, Scott Eckstein, and Benny Kling for Mayor; Sue Finch, Ken Hare, Cecilia Gunnell, DeLaws Lindsay, Richard Kemp and Elwin Roark, Council, and Sadie Smith-McDaniel, Municipal Judge.*

January 9 was Candidate Filing Day for the City of Bloomfield and three residents filed candidacy packets for the position of Mayor, six residents filed for two positions on the Bloomfield City Council, and one resident filed for the position of Municipal Judge.

Current Mayor, Scott Eckstein, Benny Kling and Cynthia Atencio all filed for the position of Mayor.

Current Council Members Elwin Roark and DeLaws Lindsay and Cecilia Gunnell, Ken Hare, Sue Finch, and Richard Kemp filed for the two positions on the City Council. **These questions and others will be printed and available in the Utilities Department and at City Hall.**

Sadie Smith McDaniel was the only candidate to file for the position of Municipal Judge.

The candidates were asked the same questions and their responses are below. Candidates are in alphabetical order.

### **Mayor:**

**Why are you seeking election?**

**Cynthia Atencio** - I am seeking election because Bloomfield is my hometown. I am a proud citizen and would like to serve my community. I have always talked about running for an elected position in my city and thought this is a good time to move forward.

**Scott Eckstein** - I am seeking a fourth term as mayor because I have lived in this community for most of my life. I have a sincere interest in the future of our city, have devoted my life to public service and am truly honored to be the voice of the citizens.

**Benny Kling** - The City of Bloomfield has regressed over the last 12 years under the current leadership.

### **City Council**

**Sue Finch** - I have always had an interest in running for a city office, (but) I put it in the back of my mind to focus on my family and working with my husband to raise five children. The time has come that I feel I can make a difference and add my love for the City of Bloomfield and share my talents with other council persons to help the city grow and be a safe place to live.

**Ken Hare** -- I am very concerned about the impacts on our community as the oil, gas and coal sectors transition and decline in the San Juan Basin. Bloomfield is facing a very challenging future as a result of these energy transformations. I feel I can bring new thoughts, ideas, experience and skill sets to the Council to help manage a very uncertain economic future that will also present new opportunities.

**Cecilia Gunnell** -I believe I will bring a different perspective to the City Council because of my youth and my ability to bring fresh eyes to the challenges the city faces.

**DeLaws Lindsay** - I believe God has given me a real love and compassion for our community. I appreciate the way this community comes together in the good times and the tough times. I consider it an honor and a privilege to serve this community.

**Richard Kemp** - No response

**Elwin Roark** - Hopefully, to complete some objectives we have set.

### **Municipal Judge**

**Sadie Smith McDaniel** - To help affect positive change and growth in my community.

**What strengths do you bring to the office?**

### **Mayor**

**Cynthia Atencio** - I am active in our community and therefore speak to the citizens on a regular basis to hear concerns and/or compliments about our city. I will work hard to make sure that the people/citizens of our town get a say in the decisions affecting our city. I will keep an open line of communication with them.

**Scott Eckstein** -The biggest strength is my experience. I have been an elected official with the City of Bloomfield since 2004. I am familiar with current projects, pas

projects and planned future projects. I have also been able to interact with the various departments to learn what their needs are.

**Benny Kling** - I have served under many mayors, governors and attorney generals for over 40 years of public service as well as running a private construction company. I have experienced the pitfalls of both.

### **City Council**

**Sue Finch** - Integrity, leadership, organization skills, common sense, and a love for the City of Bloomfield and the citizens that live here.

**Ken Hare** -Extensive business experience, solid knowledge and experience in the application of economic development and strategic planning processes, lifelong knowledge and history of the community, strong and proven involvement in local economic development, educational and business activities; strong network of knowledgeable business, educational, military, municipal and political leaders that can be tapped for new ideas and opportunities, and good negotiating skills.

**Cecilia Gunnell** - Decisive, goal oriented, reliability, ambitious and respect

**DeLaws Lindsay** - My experiences on the Planning and Zoning Commission and the last four years on the City Council. I promise to pray fervently for this city. I will also bring fairness and integrity to the office by representing our city with consistency in values, faithfulness in duty, and truth.

**Richard Kemp** - My knowledge of the community.

**Elwin Roark** - The ability to analyze any situation and respond accordingly.

### **Municipal Judge**

**Sadie Smith McDaniel** -Dedication, determination and a strong work ethic.

**How long have you lived in Bloomfield and what is your professional background?**

### **Mayor**

**Cynthia Atencio** - I have lived in Bloomfield for the last 36 years and am a Bloomfield High School Class of 1988 graduate. I have 18 years of experience working with the City of Bloomfield's government. In my time as a city employee, I tracked and maintained the Police Department's budget. I created statistical reports for the Chief to present to the City Council, showing our expenses and our incoming grants. I worked with the Chief and Lieutenant to create annual budgets. Since leaving the city, I have work in the oil and gas industry for three years. In those years, I have gotten the chance to learn about production and different aspects of oil and gas.

**Scott Eckstein** - I have lived in Bloomfield for 38 years. My professional background consists of retiring in 2007 after a successful 20-year career in law enforcement. That

career included over seven years with the Bloomfield Police Department, where I achieved the ranks of both detective and patrol sergeant. I spent the next 13 years with the San Juan County Sheriff's Office, where I also achieved the ranks of detective and patrol sergeant. I served on the Bloomfield City Council from 2004-2006; the San Juan County Commission from 2009-2016, serving as chairman in 2013 and 2016; served as Mayor for the City of Bloomfield since 2006. I have served on several local and state boards, including an appointment by Governor Martinez to the New Mexico Workforce Development Board in 2012. I was chosen as the Humanitarian of the Year in 2012 by Habitat for Humanity, 2015 Citizen of the Year by the Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce; and 2015 Alumnus of the Year by Leadership San Juan.

**Benny Kling** - I have lived in Bloomfield for 11 years. My background is law enforcement, forensic science, criminal justice instructor, financial security with FDIC, and environmental enforcement.

### **City Council**

**Sue Finch** - I came to Bloomfield in March of 1967 and graduated from Bloomfield High School. My husband and I have lived in Bloomfield since September 1974. I taught preschool for 27 years, have had leadership as a Stake and Ward Primary Presidents in my local church, have owned and managed two private businesses, and have worked within our neighborhood association to bring the North Frontier subdivision together and encourage the Neighborhood Watch program.

**Ken Hare** - I have lived in Bloomfield all my life, except for several years when I pursued corporate and college opportunities. I am a fourth generation Bloomfield resident. My great-grandfather moved to the Bloomfield area in the 1890s. The family farm is 100 years old this year. I am a retired educator having served as a teacher, counselor and college administrator. I have owned successful businesses in Bloomfield. My corporate experience is with Goodyear and Hyatt Hotels. I currently serve as principal stockholder and manager of Blanco Basin Land & Cattle Co. LLC, located in Bloomfield. The company has diversified interests in land and commercial development, royalty interests, water rights, securities and mortgage interests. I served as a member, vice-chair and chairman of the San Juan College Board for 11 years, as a member and chairman of San Juan Economic Development, a founding and charter member of 4 Corners Economic Development, served as the first chairman of the Workforce Development Committee for 4CED, and am a founding member and investor in Dragonfire Technologies, a venture capital firm..

**Cecilia Gunnell** - I have lived in Bloomfield for 35-plus years and was born and raised here. I am an Office Coordinator.

**DeLaws Lindsay** - I have lived in Bloomfield for over 25 years. I have enjoyed watching the growth and continued prosperity of our outstanding community over the

years. Professionally, I have trained horses for over 35 years and have had the privilege of serving as a worship leader and elder of a local church.

**Richard Kemp** - Twenty years; retired working foreman in the Electric Line Department for the City of Farmington.

**Elwin Roark** - I have lived in San Juan County since June 1970, 40 years of that in the Bloomfield area.

### **Municipal Judge**

**Sadie Smith-McDaniel** - Bloomfield has been my home for almost 20 years. I am a small business owner in the city running my own mental health agency and I work as a social worker at Naaba Ani Elementary School. I have a background as a magistrate probation officer. I am the mother of three amazing children, ages 8, 9, and 10.

**What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of Bloomfield?**

### **Mayor**

**Cynthia Atencio** - Bloomfield has so many strengths! I have seen our community come together so many times to support a cause, a family and individuals. We showed our Bloomfield Pride in coming together to show support for our sister city of Aztec, when tragedy struck them last month. Bloomfield's biggest strength is its citizens. Our people are a family. Our weakness is bringing in income. We need to work together to diversify our income sources and to work smarter with the assets we currently have. We need to find a way to keep and bring in the best employees for our city.

**Scott Eckstein** -Strength: Every time I am asked this question, I never hesitate to answer with an emphatic "its citizens." It is for this very reason that I remained in Bloomfield after high school, chose to buy a home here, and chose to raise my children here. I love this community and its people, and the opportunity to serve them. Weaknesses: Since the dramatic downturn in the oil and gas industry, I have found that a big weakness in the City of Bloomfield is the desperate need for more diversification. I take pride in the fact that the City of Bloomfield is so supportive of our extractive industries, and that we have so many of those businesses within our city limits, but the dramatic drop in gross receipts taxes as a result of the downturn has certainly amplified the need for diversification.

**Benny Kling** - Bloomfield is located in the heart of the Four Corners. The new highway intersection is a gateway for economic growth. We have to expound on this improvement and entice new and larger franchisees to locate in Bloomfield. Bloomfield is weak in its current utility structure. We are not in a financial position to acquire an electric utility at this time. We can maintain that right to make that purchase at a later time, when we are more financially solvent. However, other considerations should be discussed; such as the ability of residents and businesses to

utilize solar energy and selling back power to the provider without surcharges which now exist, therefore making it financially impractical for citizens to use solar power.

## **City Council**

**Sue Finch** - I think the strengths of Bloomfield are the people. We are a small town with a big heart that cares about families. Our Bloomfield schools and sports programs encourage and support family interaction to unite us as a city and county. Our Boys and Girls Club supports families. Our Chamber of Commerce supports many programs that benefit and help the citizens of Bloomfield. The industrial park is an area that encourages other businesses to make their homes in Bloomfield. The weakness of Bloomfield has been the economy in the oil, gas and coal industries. The drugs and theft problems are also on the rise.

**Ken Hare** - Our strengths include our citizens, rich archeological area, tourist attractions, oil and gas base of assets, school system and its work in workforce development, small farms, water, open space for future growth, highly respected fire department, good fire and police facilities, strong faith based community, entrepreneurs, aquatic center, and our senior programs. Our strength will lie in our citizens and how they respond to current and future challenges. We are fortunate to be situated in a rich and archeological and tourist attraction area that require extensive development. Our oil and gas natural resource base is facing challenges, but has been a source of economic strength that is transitioning. How we address this transition with new opportunities will be critical. Our school system has proven itself to be a reliable partner in workforce development through the ACT Workkeys Work Ready Community program. We have hundreds of small farms in our area that have potential to be organized into an effective agricultural coop. We are fortunate to have a large source of water with the San Juan River and Citizens Ditch associated water rights; and a good open space for future city planning. Our weaknesses include a lack of availability, responsiveness and interaction with City Administration; lack of thorough metrics based performance plan that encourages strong organization and management skills; lack an active planning and zoning process; a struggling financial picture; bonding capacity; infrastructure repair and replacement for essential city services; deteriorating condition of our recent landscaping project; financial impact regarding the ownership plan of our electrical infrastructure; adequate project research; and encouragement of local businesses.

**Cecilia Gunnell** - Bloomfield's strength is its resiliency; its weakness is its economy and the reputation it has throughout the area.

**DeLaws Lindsay** -Without a doubt, the people of this community and their willingness to come together to accomplish the very best for our city is an unmeasurable strength. Our ability as a whole to band together in times of crisis and hold up the

ones we love when they can't find the strength to hold themselves up is a strength that is unconquerable. I believe that we can certainly build our economic focus in the coming years by coming up with new and innovative ways to attract more revenue. I am very thankful for our oil and gas industry, but I believe that as a community, we have much more to offer.

**Richard Kemp** - The road into the Four Corners of the Southwest.

**Elwin Roark** - The best strength of Bloomfield is the citizens. The weakness is those who seek to divide.

### **Municipal Judge**

**Sadie Smith-McDaniel** - Bloomfield has a lot of strengths. We have access to you of the most beautiful areas in the country, a strong sense of community and hard-working, dedicated residents. Our city has amazing potential. Bloomfield, however, does seem to lack long term, diversified options for growth. There needs to be more communication with the community and a better understanding of what our residents need to improve the quality of life in our great little town.

**What are your goals, if elected?**

### **Mayor**

**Cynthia Atencio** - My first goal will be to educate myself on the financial matters of the city so we can make sure we are using our taxpayers dollars in the most efficient and beneficial manner and to present a clear and straight forward budget to our citizens. Another goal will be to research and make sure that we are offering the best services our citizens' want and need. I want to make sure that we approach citizens of all ages, from our youth to our elderly.

**Scott Eckstein** - Since originally running for City Council in 2004, my goals have always been the same, and I will continue to work on the beautification of our city. Economic development, being prudent with the citizens' tax dollars, and keeping citizens informed. I feel much progress has been made on these goals, with work still to do. In these very difficult and challenging economic times, I believe our citizens need stability in local government.

**Benny Kling** - A Mayor is the guider of the goals of the citizens. I intent to guide the council and its employees in a new direction toward new growth and financial stability.

### **City Council**

**Sue Finch** -- I would like to be a council person that represents the goals of the citizens of Bloomfield, working with the citizens and the Multicultural Center, where we could meet and share our thoughts and goals we have as citizens of Bloomfield. I would like to improve our current infrastructure by making sure we have the monies

and means to support our citizens without adding extra financial burdens to their monthly budgets, public safety services and our economic development that our families continue to flourish.

**Ken Hare** - Establish an economic development task force; institute a metrics based management by objectives plan and performance plan; develop a strategic plan based on needs assessment; promote and evaluate new thought, transparency and examination on options for the water source and electrical ownership issue, institute an active grants process to secure funding for needed infrastructure; evaluate and restructure the planning and zoning process; help to improve employee morale; establish a citizen task force for feedback on critical issues and needs assessment; work to improve customer service; insuring adequate police and fire protection and ask lots of questions!

**Cecilia Gunnell** - To bring strength, reliability and energy back to our community.

**DeLaws Lindsay** -- It is my goal to achieve a continuance of the forward progress the city is exhibiting. I would like to see current ventures flourishing and new ventures being birthed. It is my goal to secure a strong economic future for our citizens, our city and the Four Corners region as a whole. And most importantly, to instill leadership goals and continually aspire to new achievements that will have a direct and positive impact on the lives of our children and grandchildren for years to come.

**Richard Kemp** - To serve the people of Bloomfield and more knowledge to the people of Bloomfield.

**Elwin Roark** - Continue seeking current coals we have set, electrical debt reduction.

### **Municipal Judge**

**Sadie Smith-McDaniel** - As a judge I would like to provide effective impartial administration of justice, ensure timeliness in cases, and foster trust and confidence in the legal system.