

Alton mayoral primary no longer possible due to filing deadlines

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ALTON - An unprecedented Alton mayoral primary election is no longer possible due to the failure of candidates **Joshua Young** and **Dan Rauschkolb** to file all required paperwork by the filing deadlines, **Alton City Clerk Mary Boulds** said Monday afternoon.

Both men will be able to run in the general mayoral election in April, but there will be no primary election. Young and Rauschkolb reported they had received notice of a filing problem Monday following submitting their petition packets to Boulds. Young and Rauschkolb were notified via letter their submissions could not be accepted because they failed to submit a **statement of economic interest** with **Madison County**. Both men said they filed the required statement with the **City of Alton**, but not with the

Madison County Clerk's Office. Young said that notification was the second time his petition to be certified to run as a Democrat was rejected due to what he thought were petty issues.

"When I filed the papers, there was a little yellow slip with required boxes," Young said. "She checked all the boxes when I filed my petitions."

Young said his first filing of petitions was rejected due to a lack of a notary notarizing them. He said he had collected 200 signatures on a petition to run as a Democrat. When he was notified of the failure the day before Thanksgiving, Young said he canvased several areas the day after Thanksgiving and was able to collect as many as 250 signatures on his petition by the filing deadline of Nov. 28. He said he believed he was misled by Boulds when he was notified of the lack of a statement of economic interests.

"She said it was good, only to disqualify me on something she misled me on before," Young said. "We could have fixed that simply. The county said they would have never done that."

He said he was speaking with members of the Madison County Clerk's Office Monday regarding the items required for him to run as a Democrat. He said they would have gone through the needed paperwork and told him what he was missing well before the filing deadline came to pass. He believes the city clerk's office knowingly prevented him from being able to be certified to run as a Democrat.

Rauschkolb said he was confused by the issue of his failure to file a statement of economic interests with the county. He said he thought filing with the city for a citywide election would have been suitable.

"The city clerk works in conjunction with the county clerk, so filing with one should be acceptable," Rauschkolb said Monday afternoon. "It's a citywide election, so I thought I would file with the city, but not the county."

A primary election, which has never been held in a mayoral race in Madison County, **Madison County Clerk Debra Ming-Mendoza** said, would have been required if both men were able to run as Democrats. This primary vote would have taken place on Feb. 28 throughout Alton's 25 precincts, and would have been ran as any other election. This special primary election would have cost the Madison County Clerk's Office, as well as the taxpayers of Madison County a significant amount, which Ming-Mendoza estimated to be in the "several thousands of dollars" range.

"It's no different than any other election in Madison County, only it's 25 precincts reporting instead of 225," Ming-Mendoza said. "It would be in the several thousand

dollar range, it would be hard to place an exact number on it. Just Election Day itself with polling place rentals and 125 election judges at \$150 a piece would come to more than \$18,000. That's not even beginning to include the costs of 15 days of early voting, shipping equipment, equipment certifications and ballot programming."

Ming-Mendoza said the county did not budget for an Alton mayoral primary election, and would have possibly had to approach the **Madison County Board** for an emergency appropriation if the primary would have continued as both candidates had planned.

While the cost of the primary election to taxpayers has been averted, Young believes the cost to democracy may have been too much following the news Monday. He believes he may be the victim of a conspiracy against him by members of his own party.

"I want to take away the shadows the independents use to remain independent," Young said about the traditional approach of mayoral candidates running as independent or non-partisan. "I was born a Democrat, I've been voting Democrat my entire life, so why wouldn't I run as a Democrat?"

Young said Rauschkolb was asked to run as a Democrat as well, so he could possibly remove Young from the race through the primary vote. Young said **Democratic Committee Precinct Committeeman Chairperson Thomas Hawkins** instructed Rauschkolb to run as a Democrat to knock Young from the race. Young said this was done because he did not ask for the permission of the Democratic Party to run as one. Young said he worked as a Democratic Committee Precinct Committeeman under Hawkins.

"Hawkins told Rauschkolb to run as a Democrat, so I would not get the blind Democratic vote," Young said. "People who are Democrat vote Democrat."

Rauschkolb said he made the decision to run as a Democrat simply because he is a Democrat.

"I am a Democrat, I shouldn't have to sign as an independent," he said Monday afternoon.

Rauschkolb said he will speak with his attorney regarding how he will decide to run for the Alton mayoral election in April. He is not sure if he will be able to run as a Democrat or independent. Illinois's election code bars two members identifying with the same political party to run against each other for a mayoral race without first having a

primary in any municipality with a population above 15,000. When originally announcing his candidacy, Rauschkolb did not immediately identify as a Democrat; Young did.

"No one else was going to declare first," Young said.

Young said his intention to run as a Democrat would not have created the need for an expensive primary election if Rauschkolb had not also done the same. Young believes his refusal to seek approval from the Democratic Party ensured another candidate would attempt to file as a Democrat to force a primary.

"My declaring and running for office only upset them because they did not give their approval," Young said. "I do not believe I need their approval."

As per the costs of the once-possible primary election, neither Young nor Rauschkolb feel responsible for what would have been the costs of the taxpayers. Young believes his declaration to run as a Democrat would have been without cost if another candidate had not done the same. He blames Hawkins and Rauschkolb for creating that issue. Rauschkolb said his intentions were not to cost taxpayers money, but added the election laws were beyond his control.

"It's not a candidate's responsibility for the cost of the election," he said. "People do not complain about the costs of any other election. I am following the rules of the State of Illinois, and I don't know why it is such a big deal. Obviously, I don't want to spend taxpayers' money, but that is out of my control."

Before the need for a primary was voided by the failure of each candidate to file proper paperwork before the deadline, current **Alton Mayor Brant Walker** commented against the need for partisan politics in a mayoral race, but respected the rights of each candidate to run as they wished.

"While state statute allows for individuals to run as partisan candidates, I respect Alton's rich history of non-partisan elections for City offices, and will therefore again be running as an Independent," Walker said in an email. "I also don't believe it is fiscally responsible to force the first partisan primary in city history and cost taxpayers a reported \$60,000. As the son of a union organizer and public school employee, I have identified as a Democrat throughout my life, but I believe there is no place for partisan politics in municipal government. It has been my privilege to serve as the Mayor of all of Alton's citizens, not just those of a particular political party or ideology."

Boulds said the deadline for Young and Rauschkolb filing a statement of economic interest with the county has passed, meaning neither man can file to run as a Democrat.

Because of this, Boulds said she cannot certify them to run in a primary election in February.

Hawkins was contacted for comment, but RiverBender.com was told he was on vacation.