Should changes be made to city council election process?

LOCAL EDITORIAL

By The Norman Transcript Editorial Board

The filing period for Norman's upcoming February municipal election isn't for a couple of weeks, but several candidates for council and mayor positions have announced their intentions to file.

Norman staggers council elections, with odd, then even seats up for election, so council members serve two-year terms. Mayors, meanwhile, serve threeyear terms.

This year, the mayoral election falls during the same year as odd-numbered council seat elections, which means that city council candidates who represent odd-numbered wards, if they file to run for mayor and lose, will lose their seat and won't be able to run for it again for a full term. Those in evennumbered council seats, if they lose a mayoral race, would continue out their city council term. Vice-versa will be true in the next mayoral race in three years: even-numbered council members would need to choose between retaining their own seat and running for mayor.

Some have suggested council members who file to run for mayor should resign their seat, which would hypothetically even the playing field, depending on whether odd- or evennumbered council seats are up. But it could also serve as a deterrent for sitting city council members to run for mayor.

Another concern is if a council member wins the mayor's seat and still has a year remaining in their term, the council appoints someone to fill the final year in their unexpired term. It can be an awkward process, particularly because there are only eight council members voting. That means ties can and do happen, so the appointee can be determined by drawing a name out of a hat, which is what happened when former Ward 5 representative Lynne Miller won the mayor's seat two years ago.

So what do you think? Should active city council members resign when they file to run for mayor? Should the city have a different process to fill an unexpired council term? Let us know your thoughts by emailing our editor at editor@normantranscript. com.