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Three candidates already lined up Clermont GOP to choose Nov. 28

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BATAVIA - Clermont County Commissioner Mary Walker doesn't have to defend her seat in the Nov. 6 election, but a race is on to replace her because she's under investigation by the Ohio Ethics Commission.

Walker's term expires at the end of next year, and Miami Township Trustee Ed Humphrey, Batavia Township Trustee Archie Wilson and former Milford Mayor Doug Thomson have announced that they will seek the Republican Party endorsement for her seat at a Nov. 28 meeting of the GOP's Central Committee.

"I may not get the endorsement - I've only been inside that building three times in my life," Wilson said of the Republican Party's headquarters.

- [Ohio Election Guide](#)

"I thought it was a secret society there for a while."

Regardless of who wins the GOP's backing, Wilson said he plans to run in the Republican primary in March.

"If I get in a race, I get in it to win," Wilson said. "I think my chances are very good."

Thomson said he's the underdog because he hasn't been active in GOP politics since serving as Milford mayor (1983-87).

"I think I could do a good job, (and) I think the party may need a fresh look right now," said Thomson, a member of the Clermont County Planning Commission who lives in Pierce Township.

Humphrey said he thinks the GOP stalwarts who will vote on an endorsement will favor "someone who has experience, would fit into the job, has a clean record and an honest background."

Commissioners are paid \$63,833 annually and oversee a \$56.3 million budget for general operations.

Wilson and Humphrey manage multimillion-dollar budgets as trustees, but Humphrey said he was best suited for commissioner because of his work as executive director of the Clermont Transportation Connection (1998-2000).

While managing that bus company, Humphrey said, he worked closely with county commissioners, department heads and the county administrator.

Another plus, Humphrey said, is his experience working with state lawmakers as chairman of the Coalition of Large Ohio Urban Townships, a subcommittee of the Ohio Township Association.

As president of the Clermont County Township Association, which encompasses 14 townships, Humphrey is hoping for the support of other influential politicians.

Clermont County has 200 voting precincts, and a GOP representative of each one could have a say in who gets the nod for Walker's seat on the Board of Commissioners in the 2008 election.

At the endorsement vote for the 2004 elections, about 120 precinct representatives showed up, said Tim Rudd, chairman of the county Republican Party. A candidate must win 60 percent of the vote to get the endorsement.

Precincts are based on population. That could favor Humphrey - if he can count on support from the GOP representatives in Miami Township, where he has been a trustee for 18 years.

Miami Township has 41 precincts based on a population of 39,279, according to the county Board of Elections.

Batavia Township, where Wilson has been a trustee for six years, has 13 precincts based on a population of 19,988.

Pierce Township, where Thomson lives, has 12 precincts based on a population of 13,220.

Rudd said Walker - who lives in Union Township, which has 42 precincts based on a population of 43,262 - shouldn't seek the endorsement.

If she did, Rudd said, "what I would have to do is lay out the case (against Walker) as I know it," including "the wording of the Ohio Revised Code and the various advisory opinions from the Ohio Ethics Commission."

Once precinct representatives had heard all the facts, Rudd said, the Central Committee would not endorse Walker.

When contacted by The Enquirer, Walker declined to comment.

Whoever wins the endorsement would be favored to replace Walker should she resign before the 2008 election, Rudd said.

Within 45 days of a commissioner's resignation, a majority vote of Republican Party precinct representatives in the county would determine a successor, Rudd said.

Walker, who has been commissioner since 2001, acknowledged in September that she had knowingly voted for a \$58,500 county contract for a water main replacement project with Professional Engineering Group, a company run by her son, Mark D. Walker.

The office of Ohio Auditor Mary Taylor, which reviewed the county's 2006 financial records, said the vote had the appearance of impropriety and referred the matter to the Ohio Ethics Commission.