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Jones' supervisor run shakes up San Marcos city elections

Mayor's race and District 2 council seat are sans incumbents this in November



Former San Marcos city councilwoman Sharon Jenkins and current councilman Mike Sannella. (Mike Sannella, UT File)



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San Marcos Mayor Rebecca Jones will ask voters for their support this fall, but not for a third term. After earning the most votes in the June primary race to replace county Supervisor Jim Desmond, Jones is unable to simultaneously seek a third term as mayor, creating an opportunity for someone else to seek the position without facing an entrenched incumbent.

But that's not to say that the pair seeking to be Jones' successor are unknown around City Hall.

Former San Marcos City Councilmember Sharon Jenkins, who was forced not to seek re-election in 2024 by a city-imposed limit of three consecutive terms, seeks to re-enter the political scene as mayor. She's not an incumbent, per se, but, with a dozen years at the dais, six of them as deputy mayor, she can hardly be called a novice.

She will face Mike Sannella, the city's current deputy mayor, for the honor. Instead of seeking his second City Council term this fall, he pivoted when the top spot opened, making his District 2 seat available.

Desmond's decision to challenge Democratic Rep. Mike Levin, then, has created a line of opportunity through three levels of local leadership, two of them in San Marcos.

In the mayor's race, campaign finance reports covering the first half of 2026 show that Sannella, a security manager at General Atomics, has the early fundraising edge with \$42,621 available as of June 30 to Jenkins' \$29,872. However, the former councilwoman's campaign had already spent \$17,186 by that point, compared to \$8,591 for Sannella.

There is some overlap in their campaign statements, most directly seen in the city's new fire station. Sannella notes that he helped approve the building's design; Jenkins notes her work leading the citizen's committee that pushed Measure Q, the bond referendum that paid for the structure.

And both have strong benches of supporters, based on partial lists of their backers on their campaign websites. Jenkins' posse is heavy with current and former educators and known names in local civic organizations. Sannella clearly has the backing of the current establishment, with endorsements from Jones, Desmond and the current mayors of Escondido, Vista and Poway.

District 1, which straddles state Route 78, a mid-city swath of political property, is the domain of Maria Nuñez, who seeks her third term. The attorney faces Thomas Gabriele, an economics teacher at Saint Joseph Academy in San Marcos and technology entrepreneur currently working on wispr, an online application that helps Realtors share private listing information.

Neither candidate appears to have listed their endorsements, and neither had yet met the \$2,000 requirement to file financial disclosures, according to the City Clerk's Office.

District 2 is the city's southernmost political subdivision, encompassing San Elijo Hills, the master-planned community south of Double Peak, the mountain that is San Marcos' signature backdrop.

The district is currently represented by Sannella; two challengers seek to be his replacement. Lindsey Smith, president of the San Elijo Hills Community Association and member of the city's planning commission, faces Justin Matsushita, a career firefighter who was Santee's fire chief when he retired in 2025. Matsushita's campaign finance disclosure indicates that his campaign had \$27,021 as of June 30; Smith had \$11,824.

Smith's candidacy has attracted the support of many current leaders, including Jones, state senate minority leader Brian Jones, Escondido Mayor Dane White and organizations such as the Deputy Sheriff's Association of San Diego County and the California School Employees Association.

Matsushita, a section president of the California Fire Chiefs Association, lists endorsements from San Marcos Firefighters Local 4184, the San Diego & Imperial County Labor Council and IBEW Local 569.