

2 Dems hope to fill vacant Ohio House seat

Scott Wartman
Cincinnati Enquirer
USA TODAY NETWORK

Two Democrats have applied to serve as an Ohio state representative for seven months.

Whoever House Democrats pick for the vacant 28th House District seat in northern Hamilton County will have a short tenure thanks to redistricting.

Social worker Jodi Whitted, of Madeira, and attorney Regina Collins, of Forest Park, submitted resumes for the seat formerly occupied by current Hamilton County Auditor Jessica Miranda, according to resumes obtained by The Enquirer through an open records request.

Miranda resigned to take the auditor's job after the previous auditor, Bridgid Kelly, died of esophageal cancer on March 26.

Neither Whitted or Collins will be on the ballot in November. The Hamilton

County Democrats picked Symmes Township social worker Karen Brownlee to run for the House seat. Brownlee couldn't fill out the term because she doesn't live within the current district boundaries.

Republican lawmakers redrew the lines. Brownlee's Symmes Township home will be in the 28th House District next year with the new boundaries that will go into effect.

Brownlee will face Republican Jenn Giroux in the House 28th District election in November.

So Democrats need to find someone for a few months to represent the district, which includes Springdale, Sharonville and Blue Ash.

"That's the way it has to be because of gerrymandering," said Miranda. "And that's how we're moving forward. Gerrymandering is bad for all of us. This is why the process can't be seamless."

Who is making the picks?

The House Minority Caucus could make the choice as early as May 8 when the Ohio General Assembly reconvenes. Per the Ohio Constitution, the House Democratic Caucus can replace a vacancy left by a House Democrat. State law allows the county party to pick the replacement candidate on the ballot.

Two people stepped forward for the temporary job.

Who is Jodi Whitted?

Whitted is an assistant professor in the social work department at the University of Cincinnati. She's also worked on equity and inclusion issues in Madeira as a member of the city's inclusion committee. In that capacity, she served from 2020 to 2023 as the director of Madeira Pride, which organized the city's LGBTQ+ Pride Celebration.

"While the appointment to this role is

time-limited, if given the opportunity, I will serve the

constituents in District 28 with passion and dedication," Whitted wrote in her cover letter sent to Ohio House Democrats

Who is Regina Collins?

Collins had served as a council member in Forest Park from 2015 to 2019. She has run unsuccessfully against Miranda in Democratic primaries.

"Public service is a divine trust," Collins wrote to House Democrats in her cover letter. "You really have to have a heart for it."

Whom has Miranda endorsed?

Miranda has endorsed Whitted for the remainder of her House term.

"Jodi is a fierce fighting suburban mom," Miranda said. Miranda has also backed Brownlee in the election.

One Way Farm may be converted to assisted living

Sue Kiesewetter
Special to The Cincinnati Enquirer
USA TODAY NETWORK

FAIRFIELD – Optimized Senior Living wants to turn the former One Way Farm into a senior citizen assisted living facility.

But nearby residents aren't so sure that's a good use of the 12-acre site that lies in both Fairfield and Fairfield Township along East River Road.

Increased traffic the center would bring through staffing, deliveries and visitors is likely to worsen traffic along the winding road that already accommodates trucks from the nearby gravel-mining operation, residents say.

"Traffic is horrendous," said Rodney "Ray" Cadle, a nearby resident. "There's already too much going on down there."

Krista Hutzel said other properties might better accommodate the center.

"This is being crammed into a small space where it doesn't belong," she said.

The site at 6131 E. River Road had been used as a residential home for abandoned, abused and neglected children since its 1976 founding by Barbara and Gerald Condo. It closed in 2018.

A year later the nonprofit City of Refuge of Middletown bought the property and reopened the facility, keeping the One Way Farm name at Condo's request. It operated as a residential care facility for children, said Rev. John Rice, pastor at Calvary Tabernacle Church and is still in operation.

Rice said the City of Refuge Board was approached by Optimized Senior Living to purchase the land. At about that time, City of Refuge found a different facility with a larger gymnasium in a more secluded location in Butler County. Negotiations are underway to pur-

chase it and move operations there from Fairfield.

"We weren't actively pursuing (a sale of One Way Farm)," Rice said. "The timing was good."

Optimized Senior Living won't purchase the site until it gets the proper zoning and Fairfield and Fairfield Township elected officials approve the plan.

Fairfield's Planning Commission has recommended approval and city council is set to vote May 13. Fairfield Township is working with Optimized Senior Living to finalize its submission and a public hearing could be scheduled next month.

The plan calls for a 3,800-square-foot addition to the rear of the main building where offices and a multi-purpose room were housed. When the addition and renovations are done, 24 residents will be housed there.

Two residential buildings in the back

of the property in the Fairfield Township portion would be renovated as memory care units, each housing six residents.

One of the two metal buildings in the township portion of the site would be renovated and used as an adult daycare center while the other would be used for storage and administrative purposes.

A second phase – if needed – would include two, one-story buildings south of the main building. Each would house 16 people.

The buildings would have open space common living, dining, and kitchen areas. Residents would have private bedrooms and bathrooms. Meals, housekeeping, transportation and personal care services would be provided.

The exteriors of all the buildings would be painted white and new black shingles are planned for roofs to give all buildings a uniform look.

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