

Miller running on her record for City Council seat

BY FRED MANN
The Wichita Eagle

The first time somebody raised the idea of running for political office, Janet Miller got up and ran away.

Her husband, who was with her at the time, didn't, and that's how Nile Dillmore ended up a state representative instead of Miller.

Miller said she preferred working closer to home and staying behind the



Miller

Thomas.

And she's still trying to get comfortable with the idea that she is the person she is campaigning for.

scenes while campaigning for others, such as Joan Cole and Sharon Fearey.

But now she's running her own campaign for Fearey's District 6 City Council seat against Bob Aldrich, Damon Isaacs and Ken

"I tell people I would much rather just interview for the job," Miller said.

"But I've decided that's the price you have to pay for the privilege of doing this work. And it is a privilege."

"She's not a self-promoter. That's never been her style at all," said Lowell Richardson, Miller's former boss at the Mid American Credit Union. "She's willing to take leadership, but she's not in it for her own glory."

The suggestion to run for office came

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MILLER

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from former state Rep. Doug Johnston in 2000.

She and Dillmore had helped with Johnston's campaigns for the 92nd District House seat. When he decided to run for the state Senate seat he'd eventually lose to Jean Schodorf, he invited Miller and Dillmore to lunch and asked if either would be interested in running for his House seat.

"I got up and ran out of the restaurant," Miller said.

Dillmore remained seated. He decided to run and was elected.

Miller said opponents would be wrong to argue that she is running on Dillmore's record.

"We're married, but this endeavor is really an individual effort," she said. "I'm running on what I have done with people in this community."

Miller, president of the park board, describes herself as a lifelong learner who is driven to know as much as she can about issues and thrives on multitasking.

"I'm kind of a Type-A personality in that regard," Miller said.

She figures she inherited an analytical mind from her father, a former longtime mechanical engineering professor at Kansas State University.

Who is JANET MILLER

Age: 43

Occupation: Wichita Park Board president

Education: Bachelor's degree, secondary education, Kansas State University; Spanish classes, Wichita State University

Political experience: None

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Miller grew up in Manhattan and was a self-described nerd who played clarinet in the high school band. She earned a degree in secondary education from K-State.

She moved to Wichita 22 years ago and taught in the school district before taking a job with Mid American Credit Union, where she did employee training and development, then marketing and public relations.

Miller became active in her neighborhood association in Midtown, and joined a downtown board as the neighborhood representative.

That led to an interest in downtown revitalization, she said. And that led to an interest in Exploration Place, then on the edge of downtown development.

Miller was one of the first people hired by Exploration Place in 1995. She helped it expand to its new facility, which opened in 2000.

When she left in 2003, she was director of visitor services, marketing and sales, responsible for a \$1 million budget and a staff of 35.

Miller went to the Kansas Health Foundation as director of communications for two years, but found that to be an all-consuming job that took her away from community involvement.

"I just kind of felt my heart shrivel up," she said.

So she left to pursue full-time community work.

Miller is a member of the District 6 Advisory Board and 21st Street Business Association, and vice chairwoman of the Task Force to End Chronic Homelessness.

Her campaign had raised \$24,580 by Jan. 10, according to the most recent county records. That's more than any other candidate in the race.

Her campaign priorities include the local economy, neighborhoods and quality of life.

Miller emphasizes fiscal responsibility in these harsh economic times, but she also cautions against retreating from planning for future growth.

"We're going to have to cut spending for a couple of years, but now also is the perfect time to be planning what we want to do to take Wichita to the next level as soon as the economy starts its upswing," Miller said. "It's critical we're prepared to take advantage of that upswing."

QUESTIONS FOR JANET MILLER

Q: The city's budget is at deficit this year, and more cutbacks probably will be needed. Where do you think the city can trim expenses, how much money do you think that could save and how do you think it would affect residents?

A: My priorities will be to ensure public safety, maintain infrastructure, and position our city — through economic development efforts — for better times to come. Cuts need to be strategi-

cally targeted rather than across the board. Before making recommendations on where to cut, I would ensure citizens are given opportunity to participate in this process and develop priorities.

Q: City Council members make decisions involving millions of dollars and thousands of lives, all the while pressured by special interests, staff recommendations and your personal feelings. Please explain how your experiences in your job and education

qualify you for the job.

A: Through my professional and community experience, I've learned an effective decision-making process. I thoroughly read all material presented, listen to the various perspectives of constituents, talk with those who have relevant experience, and research the issue and best practices. Then I make an informed decision. This approach minimizes the likelihood of being unduly influenced by one party or group.