

# Register of deeds won't seek re-election

JOEY GARRISON  
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

After 19 years in his current office and 31 years working in Metro government, Davidson County Register of Deeds Bill Garrett says he won't seek re-election next year.

With the seat opening for the first time in two decades, candidates are already lining up to try to replace him.

Richard Exton, principal of the Nashville-based appraisal firm Manier & Exton, confirmed he will run for the seat in 2018. Kim LeGate, chief deputy of operations for the Register of Deeds Office, said she will run as well.

Meanwhile, Antioch-area Councilwoman Karen Johnson said she is considering running for the position.

Garrett, 58, was first elected as register of deeds in 1998 after previously working in Metro's information technology department. He said now is the right time to retire.

"I'll have 32 years in Metro at the end of this term," Garrett said. "I just basically think that I'm ready to retire. That's pretty much all there is to it."



Garrett



Exton



Johnson



LeGate

The register of deeds, a state constitutional officer, serves as the custodian of legal documents that pertain to real property such as warranty deeds, deeds of trust, releases, powers of attorney, liens and plats.

The position pays \$127,837 a year.

In 1998, Garrett, son of former Metro Trustee Bill Garrett Sr., beat out five others seeking the seat, most notably former Nashville Mayor and U.S. Rep. Bill Boner, who was a Tennessee state representative at the time of his run for register of deeds, a countywide office.

Next year's county primary for local seats is in May followed by the general election in August 2018.

## Exton, LeGate first to announce candidacies for register of deeds

Exton, former president of the Greater Nashville Association of Realtors, who ran unsuccessfully for Metro Council at-large in 2007, said he plans to soon file to run for the seat as a Democrat.

"I've spent the last 35 years of my life in the real estate business," Exton said. "I deal with deeds and that office indirectly almost every day. It's something I'm very familiar with."

LeGate, who has worked in the Register of Deeds Office since 1985, said she has wanted to run for a long time.

"When Mr. Garrett said he was retir-

ing, I knew that this was the right time," LeGate said.

"With the industry changing as often as it is right now, I think it's important to elect someone who understands the dynamics of the industry."

Johnson, a former Nashville school board member who is in the middle of her second term representing parts of Antioch on the council, said she's unsure when she will make a decision.

"I'm not there yet," said Johnson, who ran for a countywide seat in 2010, when she fell short in a bid for Juvenile Court clerk. "Bill Garrett has done a fine job during his tenure, but any office could benefit from a breath of fresh air and new ideas."

District 50 Tennessee House Rep. Bo Mitchell, D-Nashville, had been rumored as a possible register of deeds candidate, but he told The Tennessean he won't be running for the seat.

Reach Joey Garrison at [jgarrison@tennessean.com](mailto:jgarrison@tennessean.com) or 615-259-8236 and on Twitter @joeygarrison.

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