

# **Baltimore Council Members Vie For Presidency**

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With Baltimore City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake about to become mayor, four council members are vying to replace her, and one began lobbying for the position before Mayor Sheila Dixon was even convicted, 11 News has learned.

Two council members said they also approached a former city councilman and mayoral candidate about the job.

Rawlings-Blake will be sworn in as mayor on Feb. 4, the day Dixon's resignation takes effect. Dixon was convicted of perjury and misdemeanor embezzlement. In a surprise move, she announced she would step down on Wednesday.

Four council members have expressed interest in the council president's job: Bernard "Jack" Young, William Cole, Nicholas D'Adamo and Belinda Conaway.

City Hall insiders told 11 News that Young has been lobbying colleagues since jury selection in the Dixon trial to get the position. At the time, Young told 11 News he attended the court proceedings as a Dixon supporter.

City Hall insiders said Young wanted the job when Dixon became mayor and had a falling out with Rawlings-Blake when she got the votes. Insiders alleged that promises were made to Young that the next opportunity belonged to him.

Young and Cole are believed to be the front-runners. Four council members told *The Baltimore Sun* they support Young.

Cole waited until the judicial process played out before declaring his intentions.

"I certainly would be honored to serve, but I need to discuss it with my colleagues to find out where they are," he told 11 News I-Team reporter David Collins.

Cole considers himself an ally of Rawlings-Blake, Collins reported. They have teamed up on a number of occasions, including asking the Greater Baltimore Committee to examine the expensive police and fire pension plan and come up with cost-savings recommendations.

"We don't always agree, but the one thing that is wonderful about my relationship with her is we don't have to agree, but we don't always have to fight. So, we found ways to work through these things," Cole said.

The councilman admitted he and another member of the City Council first approached former council member and candidate for mayor Keiffer Mitchell about the job.

According to the city charter, council members will elect a new leader after Rawlings-Blake leaves the position, but the candidate doesn't have to be a council member. It can be anyone who is 25 years old and has been a city resident for at least a year.

Mitchell told 11 News he doesn't want to leave his current job as a banker but would consider filling in temporarily if a stalemate developed.

"I told my colleagues a while ago that if there was no settlement and if they needed a caretaker, it's something that I would consider," he said.

The council president must be elected by eight of the 14 council members. All are Democrats.

City charter doesn't spell out a time frame to pick a new council president. Insiders said the jockeying for votes will continue until at least Feb 4, when the mayor is formally sentenced.