

Councilman to run for Alexandria mayor

Democrat Euille would be first black person to hold post

By TRIGIE EALEY
Journal staff writer

Alexandria City Council member William D. Euille formally announced his candidacy for mayor Friday in a bid to become the first black person elected to the office.

Euille made the announcement at a news conference attended by nearly 100 supporters — a who's who of the city's Democratic party — in the meeting room of the newly reopened Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch Library, 4701 Seminary Road.

Mayor Kerry J. Donley announced last month he would not seek re-election in order to spend more time with his family.

While he said some have asked him if he is "crazy" for running for mayor, Euille, 51, said love for his native city is the reason for his desire to lead Alexandria. The past eight years on City Council have been fueled by the fire in his belly, something he said he shares with his fellow City Council members.

"We do it because we really care, we love our jobs," Euille said. "It comes with a lot of ups and downs, probably more downs than ups, but at any rate we certainly don't do it for the money. We do it because of the compassion that we have, that the fact that we believe the service to humanity is the best work in life."

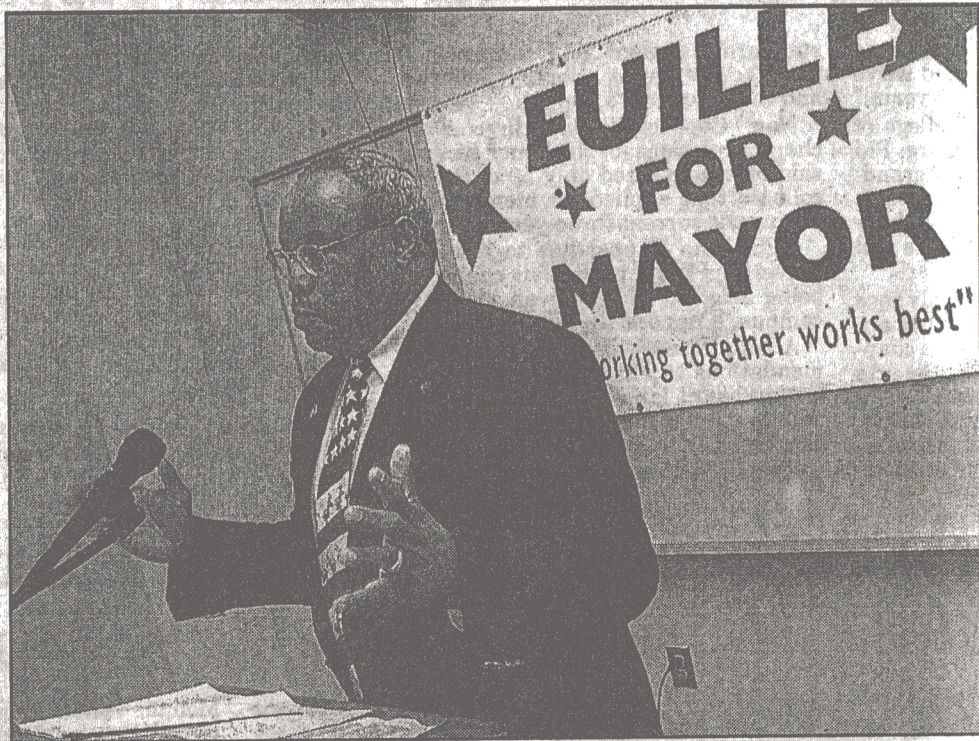
Euille operates Wm. D. Euille and Associates Inc., a construction company with annual sales averaging \$15 million. He also operates the William D. Euille Foundation, which supports local nonprofit organizations that "promote hope, opportunity and prosperity." He donates his annual \$20,000 City Council salary to the foundation.

Euille, wearing his "good luck" tie showing an American flag design adorned with the Democratic donkey, said he will offer his platform specifics this fall when the election campaigns kick off.

Instead, he commented generally on the issues facing the city. Alexandria faces many problems and opportunities in economic development, transportation, education, health care, public safety and security and affordable housing, Euille said.

He said the issues "will require vision and hard work by our city government and the dedicated involvement of the citizens of Alexandria. I want to help Alexandria build on its many strengths and become an even better place to live and work."

On hand for Euille's announcement were numerous Alexandria Democrats including Donley, City Council members Redella S. "Del" Pepper and Joyce Woodson, Alexan-



Brig Cabe/Journal

Alexandria City Councilman William D. Euille announces Friday at the Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch Library his intention to run for mayor of the city.

dria Commonwealth's Attorney S. Randolph Sengel, Virginia state Sen. Patricia S. Ticer and Dels. Brian J. Moran and Marian Van Landingham.

Alexandria Democratic Committee Chairwoman Susan B. Kellom said she knew of no other candidates interested in challenging Euille as the party's candidate for mayor, which pays \$25,000 annually. She said he will lead the party's Democratic slate for the May 6, 2003, election.

"We're thrilled," she said of Euille's candidacy. "We're absolutely thrilled."

No other candidates have made formal announcements. Alexandria's Republican Vice Mayor William C. Cleveland is considered the GOP front-runner. The U.S. Capitol police officer, who is also black, has not announced whether he will campaign for mayor or seek to retain the City Council seat he has held since 1988.

Euille said he made the announcement on the city's West End because he intends to reach out to voters there. West End voters have been a challenge to political candidates because numerous high-rise apart-

ment buildings, condominiums and garden-style apartments make door-to-door campaigning difficult.

If elected, Euille would be the first black mayor in Alexandria's long history. He is not the first black person to seek the office.

Democrat William C. Coleman, who operated a dairy, sought the office in 1897, according to information provided Friday by the Office of Historic Alexandria. Coleman came in third with 22 votes, behind fellow Democrats George L. Simpson, who received 1,633 votes, and Gilbert Simpson, who received 162 votes.

The first black person to serve on the City Council was the Baptist Rev. George W. Parker, elected in 1870. Ira L. Robinson, who served from 1970 to 1973, was the first black person elected to City Council since Reconstruction.

Euille downplayed the significance inherent with being the first black mayor in Alexandria.

"I would want to be known as the mayor of Alexandria who happens to be African-American," he said Friday.