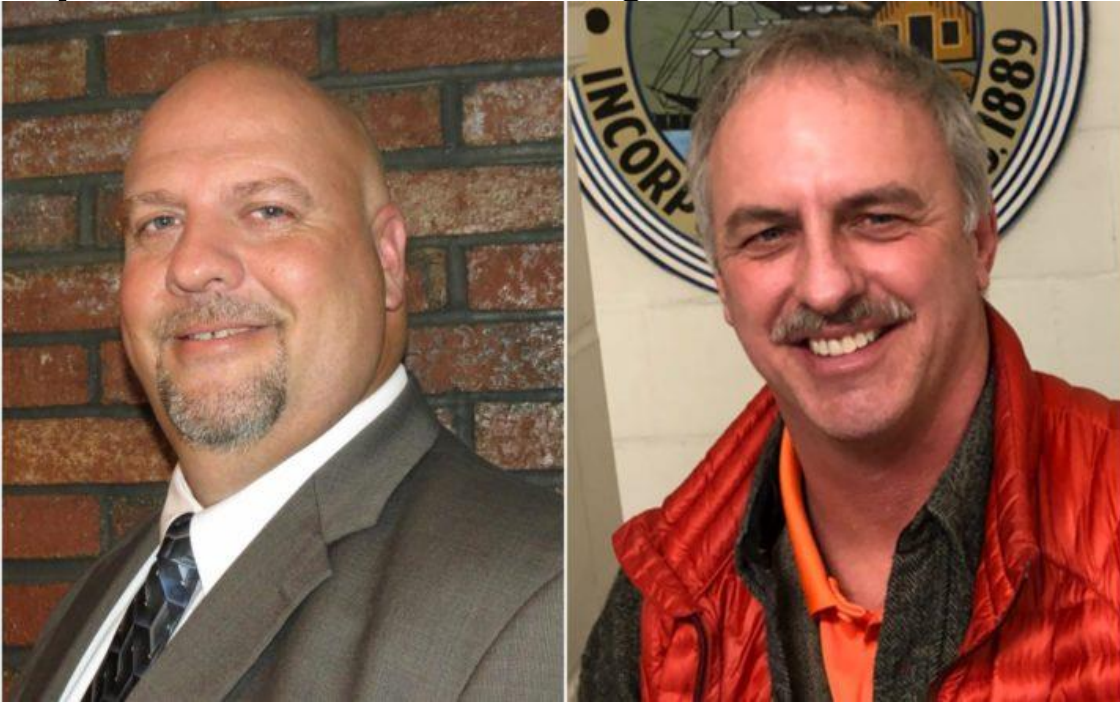


A former legislator and former mayor compete to represent Brewer in Augusta



Composite image | BDN

Republican Garrel Craig, left, and Democrat Kevin O'Connell

By [Eesha Pendharkar](#), BDN Staff • February 14, 2020 1:00 am

A former state legislator and former mayor, both longtime Brewer residents, are running against each other in a [special election](#) next month to represent part of Brewer in the Maine House.

Republican Garrel Craig and Democrat Kevin O'Connell will compete in the March 3 special election to fill the House seat last held by Rep. Archie Verow, which has been vacant [since Verow's death in December](#). Craig is looking to return to the Legislature, having held the House seat from 2016 to 2018. O'Connell is a former Brewer mayor looking to represent the city in Augusta.

Party members chose O'Connell and Craig as their candidates during caucuses in January. The winner will serve the remainder of Verow's term, which ends in December.

The special election takes place the same day as Maine's presidential primary and a statewide referendum asking voters if they want to repeal a new state law eliminating religious and philosophical exemptions from school vaccination requirements.

Garrel Craig: Craig said he is looking to return to the Legislature to continue addressing budget and spending issues that he focused on in his first term.

"We need to get a better handle on our spending," he said. "I think we should spend what we have and do less bond work."

Craig said he would like to resume his work on the Legislature's Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee to focus on reducing health care costs, nursing homes and what he said was an overloaded state Department of Health and Human Services.

If elected, Craig said, he would not support any new taxes.

The Brewer native worked for Bangor Savings Bank and now works as a sales specialist for a home improvement store.

Kevin O'Connell: O'Connell has served Brewer for 30 years in several capacities, including two terms as mayor, in 2013 and 2017. He's been a city councilor, a school board member, and served on a number of other boards and committees. He's now looking to represent the city in Augusta.

"It's something I've always wanted to do," he said. "I didn't want to do it if Archie was doing it. I was going to wait until he was done."

O'Connell has worked as a lineman for Emera Maine for more than 30 years. He also served in the Maine Army National Guard for 24 years, which included time in Iraq.

If elected, he said he wants to focus on transportation issues, especially the Maine Department of Transportation's planned [Interstate 395 extension project that has been the subject of debate in Brewer](#). The 6-mile I-395 connector would extend I-395 from the Brewer-Holden town line to Route 9 in Eddington. O'Connell said he would also like to focus on housing and "equal representation for everybody."

"I'm proud to try to carry on the legacy of service that was so important to our great friend Archie Verow," O'Connell said in a campaign email. "In him, we had a representative that represented the values of this city. I am committed to doing my best to be that person for Brewer."

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Kevin has signed unanimous [resolutions of nonsupport](#) of the connector project at least three times since the start of 2012. Please consider voting for Kevin to see if he can talk some sense into the DOT; at a time when the DOT can't even afford basic road and bridge maintenance – they shouldn't be building a new \$100 million connector that the City of Brewer does not support.