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Editorial

The dawn of a better Denver

The Denver Post

Article Last Updated: 11/07/2007 12:25:53 PM MST

Denver voters on Tuesday ended a long cycle of neglecting the city's infrastructure by approving a more fiscally responsible program of routine maintenance along with a host of bond issues.

Now, city officials must prove themselves worthy of the confidence expressed by the electorate - above all by ensuring that the \$27.5 million in new revenue expected to be generated by the 2.5 mill property tax hike in Issue 1A is indeed spent to maintain city facilities and not diverted, directly or indirectly, to other programs.

Besides approving the vital maintenance mill levy, as of late last night voters were approving, by varying margins, eight separate bond issues to repair or upgrade transportation, libraries, parks, cultural and public safety facilities. Some of those funds will be used to repair the results of past neglect while others will pay for new and expanded facilities.

For the city to keep faith with the voters, it won't be enough to spend the \$27.5 million in new funds to maintain our infrastructure. Denver must make sure that money is spent on maintenance in *addition* to the \$44.5 million a year already spent on repairs and upkeep. In short, we want to see at least \$72 million a year spent to maintain and improve the city's existing \$5 billion in infrastructure.

Fortunately, legal mechanisms to track both those old and new funds are now in place. Both sets of maintenance funds will appear as separate items in future budgets so voters can tell at a glance if their orders are being carried out. So congratulations to Denver citizens for telling their city to follow the same prudent preventive maintenance policies most voters already practice in their private lives.

We're a little less thrilled about passage of Initiative 100, which purports to make enforcing state and federal marijuana laws the city's lowest law enforcement priority.

We do hope state and federal authorities interpret the vote as a nudge from the public to reform our draconian drug laws to put more emphasis on prevention and treatment of drug abuse and less emphasis on throwing the victims of the abuse in jail.

We also think Denver voters made the right call by re-electing Bruce Hoyt to the Denver Public Schools board. Board president Theresa Peña also appeared to be on her way to another term. Both incumbents will be instrumental in leading DPS's solid reform plan over the next four years.

They're highly knowledgeable, dedicated and have served Denver with distinction.

Our choice in District 5, Arturo Jimenez, was locked in a close race with Tony Curcio. In our view, Jimenez stood out in the talented field of candidates because of his long history in North Denver and experience in school issues. Not only is he an active supporter of the district's current reform plans, the lawyer is also president of the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition. Through that organization, Jimenez, who is fluent in Spanish, has worked to get parents, particularly Latino parents, involved in their children's schools.

In other metro area elections of note, Aurora's able mayor, Ed Tauer, won a second term, as did all incumbent city council members.

In Lakewood, it appeared well-qualified council veteran Bob Murphy would move up to the top job, accompanied by a slate of five council members committed to maintaining the fiscally prudent and environmentally progressive policies of outgoing mayor Steve Burkholder.

Thursday, November 8, 2007

1 DPS board seat still undecided

A lawyer who heads the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition is leading the tightest race on Denver's ballot for a seat to represent northwestern Denver on the school board. Arturo Jimenez, 35, would be the newest member of the seven-member board if the trend continues that pushed him ahead of environmental engineer Tony Curcio for the District 5 seat. That seat is being vacated by Lucia Guzman because of term limits. The new board is to be sworn in Nov. 19. Jimenez trailed early Tuesday. By Wednesday morning, Jimenez had a lead of 190 votes. District 5 is the only one still in question of the three seats up for election this year. School board incumbents Theresa Peña was re-elected for the at-large seat, and Bruce Hoyt retained the seat that represents southeastern Denver.

Jeremy P. Meyer, The Denver Post

Rocky Mountain News

Thursday, November 8, 2007

Jimenez declared winner in Dist. 5

Contest remained undecided a day after polls closed

**By Nancy Mitchell, Rocky Mountain News
November 8, 2007**

Arturo Jimenez was sleeping about 11 p.m. Wednesday when he was declared the apparent victor in the city's closest candidate race, that of representing northwest neighborhoods on the Denver Public Schools board of education.

Jimenez had pulled an all-nighter Election Night as he and opponent Tony Curcio were separated by fewer than 400 votes.

Late Wednesday, preliminary results put Jimenez on top by 368 votes.

"I left him a message on his cell phone saying, call me, you won," said his campaign manager, Manolo Gonzalez-Estay, about 11:15 p.m. "This is it."

Earlier Wednesday, as Jimenez's slight lead began to widen, he remained cautious.

"I'm getting a lot of congratulatory phone calls, but I'm still cautiously optimistic and I don't want to assume anything. I'd much rather wait until the final tally is in," he said. "It's hard waiting."

About 2,000 ballots citywide remain to be counted but Gonzalez-Estay said that, based on prior vote totals for the District 5 school board seat, it's unlikely they would affect the outcome.

State law triggers an automatic recount if the final tally shows one candidate winning by less than 1 percent. The difference between Jimenez and Curcio appears to be more than that. Still, Curcio or any candidate can seek a recount if they want to pay for it.

"That's rare because it can be pretty expensive," Gonzalez-Estay said. Two DPS board members, current president Theresa Peña and current vice president Bruce Hoyt, had easier Wednesdays after celebrating victory on election night.

The *Rocky Mountain News* named Hoyt the winner in the race to represent southeast Denver early Tuesday evening, after he picked up nearly two-thirds of the vote.

The newspaper named Peña the winner in the at-large race on Wednesday, when results showed she had nearly 47 percent of the vote.

Peña's campaign had raised \$102,555 through Oct. 28 and had spent \$97,050, according to the most recent campaign finance filings.

That tops the prior financial record set in 2005 by another at-large candidate, Brad Buchanan, who spent more than \$70,000.

But while Peña, who outspent her opponents by nearly five to one, was victorious, Buchanan was not, meaning more money does not automatically mean more votes. Nor can endorsements be counted on to deliver results. Buchanan's 2005 rival, Jill Conrad, won the backing of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association and the board seat.

But DCTA's picks this Election Day - John McBride to oppose Peña, Laurence Botnick against Hoyt and newcomer Raymond Gutierrez in northwest Denver - fell flat in all three board races.

Mayor John Hickenlooper's golden touch did seem to matter - in his first foray into DPS campaigns, he backed winners Peña and Hoyt. But City Auditor Dennis Gallagher's support did not.

He sided with the same candidates endorsed by the teachers' union and campaigned most heavily for Gutierrez, a 22-year-old clerk at the grocery store Gallagher frequents in northwest Denver.

mitchelln@RockyMountainNews.com

<<mailto:mitchelln@RockyMountainNews.com>> or 303-954-

Counting is over; victory for final bond measure

By Myung Oak Kim and Sara Burnett
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

Denver election workers finished counting ballots late Wednesday, essentially declaring victory for the ballot's ninth and final bond measure approving a renovation for Boettcher Hall.

About 7,000 of the 94,000 ballots cast had been uncounted going into Wednesday evening.

But just after 10 p.m., election officials announced a final tally.

"All of the ballots have been run through the counting machines," according to a news release. "All that remains to be counted are approximately 2,000 ballots that will have to be duplicated.

"Please remember these results remain unofficial until the post-election audit and canvass of results are complete."

The release was from Elections Division spokesman Alton Dillard, who ended with the note: "Signing off after 40 straight hours, Alton."

The outcome also means that Arturo Jimenez won the Denver Schools District 5 race. His closest opponent was Tony Curcio. The vote difference was just under 400 votes.

The outcome also means that voters approved all nine ballot issues backed by Mayor John Hickenlooper. The mayor had asked voters to approve a property tax increase to pay for ongoing maintenance of the city's assets and \$550 million in bond projects, from new libraries and rec centers to remodeling existing buildings.

The vote totals were delayed after problems surfaced Tuesday night, when the election staff became so backlogged that city officials called in 15 police officers, including members of the SWAT team to help process ballots.

Clerk and Recorder Stephanie O'Malley blamed the delay on the 22,000 ballots received Tuesday.

The high number caught staff off-guard, O'Malley said, though she told a City Council committee Wednesday that her office was expecting 10,000 to 20,000 election day ballots.

The larger problem, she said, was a lack of space in the clerk and recorder's office. The office was filled to capacity both Tuesday and Wednesday, with folding tables set up even in the lobby and a storage room late Tuesday.

That was enough space for 146 people to work.

9 News

Wednesday, November 7, 2007

DPS leaders relieved incumbents remain on school board

created: 11/7/2007 5:46:23 PM

Last updated: 11/7/2007 6:25:08 PM

Written by Nelson Garcia

DENVER – Ever since Michael Bennet took over as superintendent of the Denver Public School District, he had a plan. He's in the midst of making sweeping changes across the district. However, the biggest obstacle he may have faced was new school board members.

"Losing that cohesiveness was a risk that we were certainly worried about," said Bennet.

He has worked closely with the school board over the past two years. Right now, Bennet is in the middle of his biggest proposal yet, the closure of eight schools and the re-forming of five others.

"It's hard work and it's complicated work and to have the chance to sustain it over a period of time is really a unique opportunity," said Bennet.

Three of the school board seats were up for election. Only two incumbents were

running because term limits prevented Rev. Lucia Guzman from running again. The Denver Classroom Teachers Association, the union, endorsed three of the challengers in the races. Union President Kim Ursetta says teachers wanted new leadership after a contentious bargaining process with the district.

"Change may be hard, but on the other hand, change is good," said Rosena Archuleta, a 2nd grade teacher at Remington Elementary. "Change brings growth, so if there are more people in there, I'm for it."

However, Board President Theresa Pena and Board Vice President Bruce Hoyt were able to retain their seats. Bennet says this is a re-affirmation of his reform efforts.

"I do believe that to a degree," said Bennet. "But, I also think we have to continue to make sure the message gets out about what it is we're trying to do."

Bennet says all public officials need to earn their job everyday, especially in a time when so much change is being proposed. The school board will vote on the school closure plan on November 19.

"Having the election behind us and being able to move forward with some sense of momentum is important to the district," said Bennet.

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Thursday, November 8, 2007

Custodian injured after possibly being shot through school window

Created: 11/7/2007 9:49:50 PM

Last updated: 11/7/2007 9:54:58 PM

DENVER – Police say a custodian working inside Montbello High School was hit in the back in an apparent shooting on Wednesday night.

Denver Police say the woman was working inside a hallway when the shot came from outside just before 8 p.m.

The woman did not immediately notice the shot, but only felt pain in her shoulder. She went to her supervisor and he told her that she had a buck shot wound or a pellet shot wound in her back.

A co-worker then saw the hole in the window.

The woman suffered non-life threatening injuries, but was taken to the hospital with a puncture wound to her back.

Police are still investigating the shooting. They are unsure if a pellet gun or something else broke the window.

No one else was injured.

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