

Voters approve rec center, broadband initiative, revised city charter

By Drew Setterholm Daily Press Staff Writer | Posted: Wednesday, April 2, 2014 1:27 am

It was a “yes” night for the city of Montrose general municipal election on Tuesday — voters said “yes” to a community recreation center, a broadband initiative and a revised city charter, as well as to three city council candidates.

Referred Measure B was the most highly anticipated result of the election, and it was also the most closely contended by voters. The measure to approve a 0.3 percent sales tax to support construction of a community recreation center passed by a slim margin, roughly 52 percent to 48 percent.

According to an unofficial count of the 5,790 ballots cast, 2,972 were in favor of the measure and ordinance, and 2,734 were against. Eighty-four under votes accounted for about 1.5 percent, where the voter made no selection.

Referred Measure A was a sweeping success, passing by a margin of roughly 74 percent to 26 percent. The measure effectively restored the city’s right to enter the telecommunications, cable and advanced services market.

City officials have said the passage of Measure A would open discussions of a citywide broadband initiative, likely keying on construction of a fiber optic network.

Amendments to the city charter also passed by a 74 percent to 26 percent margin. The amendments were, in large part, a modernizing of language and an update of common practices.

Three city council seats up for election were filled by three candidates running unopposed, one in each district.

District I councilor David Romero retained his seat and will begin a new four-year term. Mayor Judy Ann Files retained her at-large position and will begin another two-year term.

Rex Swanson joins the council for a four-year term in the District II vacancy. Councilor Carol McDermott chose to not run for re-election.

Of the 10,238 total ballots mailed to registered voters in the city, 5,790 were returned, representing a 56.55 percent voter turnout. The unofficial results will be reviewed by the canvassing board on April 7, and barring any major dispute, will be formally accepted.

Mayor Judy Ann Files, upon receiving the announcement of results at City Hall, said the election demonstrated a unity between the council and the electorate. The council passed resolutions supporting all three ballot initiatives prior to the election.

“This council doesn’t do hardly anything without really finding out from constituents how they feel, and we talk with each other,” Files said. “We’re not just five of us making separate decisions; we’re reaching out to the community and we’re finding out. We feel that this was best for the community.”

On Measure B specifically, Files said, “It’s the sign of a forward-thinking community, and that we’re willing to take this risk and step out there and do whatever it takes to make our community better.”

City Manager Bill Bell was excited to have all three ballot initiatives pass.

“I think specifically on the charter amendments and the broadband initiative with such large margins, it shows that our community is filled with people who understand that we need to make progress as a community to move forward, and it’s a very exciting time to be in Montrose,” Bell said.

“Measure B was a lot closer, but us at the city, we’re glad that it passed.”

Bell called the recreation center initiative a sign of a progressive community ready to compete in the current economy.

Each of the ballot measures carries a burden of work ahead, but it is work that will be eagerly met.

“There’s going to be a lot of work over the next two to three years with all of these projects, but you can’t really ask for a more exciting time than to be part of projects like that,” Bell said.