

Initial election tallies have clear leaders in city, county races

November 4, 2020



In a room littered with supporters at 8 p.m. on election night at the Del Norte County Republican headquarters, Crescent City Council incumbent Jason's Greenough's first call to share the initial vote tally was to his mom, Roxanne.

He said he was excited to share with her that the initial results were nearly as much as his total the first time he was elected to office. While he contends he's not out of the woods yet and is optimistic the results are going in his favor, Greenough said his priorities haven't changed for his second term.

"I don't want to change what I've been doing the last four years. I ran on being a business-friendly voice, beautifying the city and getting as balanced a budget as we can and be fiscally responsible with people's money," Greenough said.

"I'm humbled by the initial results. I wasn't expecting it to go as well as it did," he added. "I'm grateful to the people of Crescent City for their support."

Greenough's lead would hold up to when the Election's Office final tally was released at 9:46 p.m. With six candidates and the top three vote getters taking the three available seats on the City Council, Greenough had 483 votes, Alexander Campbell in second with 445 and Raymond Altman third at 377. Beau Smith was in fourth at 361, Herman Rinkel next with 289 votes and Eric Gill with 171 votes.

County Clerk Alissia Northup said the elections office began processing ballots about a week ago, with about 50 percent of the ballots they've received counted. That does not include all the early vote-by-mail ballots, the vote by mail ballots dropped off at polling locations or provisional ballots.

She said usually her office has 30 days to certify the election.

"But because of COVID and special legislation, we have to take ballots postmarked by election day up to Nov. 20," Northup said. "Hopefully we'll have an update on our website by Friday and a number, the raw count, to process by Thursday."

View updated results online at www.co.del-norte.ca.us/departments/clerk-recorder/elections.

By the Wednesday morning, Valerie Starkey's voice was still sore, she said from the all the screaming in elation she did at her own election night viewing party with her core campaign team. Starkey got out to an early lead over incumbent Lori Cowan for the District 2 County Supervisor's seat. As of Wednesday, Starkey maintained the lead 871 to 635.

"In my experience, the initial numbers set the tone for how it's going to go," Starkey said. "I'm super excited, but not overconfident."

With a feeling of there not enough provisional ballots to overcome her lead, Starkey said she has the luxury of looking forward to her first term.

"My initial plan, probably the first six to eight months, is set my foundation, get my feet going. I want to reach out to all the department heads, shadowing them, to see their needs, get the community's needs," Starkey said.

As a probation officer for 30 years and a CASA volunteer, Starkey sees her position as County Supervisor as an opportunity focus on youth, making sure they're protected and help break cycle of abuse so many of them suffer.

She said her focus is also on what her constituents want. But with precautions due to the pandemic, Starkey felt the voters didn't get the chance to really get to know her.

"I'm hoping over the next four years they get to know who I am and I get to know who they are and find out together where we have common goals," Starkey said.

Meanwhile the race for the Area 3 seat for the Del Norte School Board of Trustees is considerably closer than the other races. Out of 9,265 votes cast, challenger Sheryl Steinruck is just 88 votes ahead of incumbent

Frank Magarino — 3,145 to 3,057. Even though William Hartwick dropped out of the race, he was unable to get his name removed from the ballot in time. As a result, he still received 2,421 votes.

Magarino said he wants to wait to comment on the results until they have been certified.

“With less than one percent within that margin, and still quite a few ballots to be counted, I just want to wait,” he said.

Steinruck, on the other hand was still buzzing with excitement the day after the election.

“The only thing keeping me together is my skin,” Steinruck said.

Worried the results could be close enough to cause a runoff, she said she’s still joyful and is looking forward to getting on school board if results hold up.

“Personally, what I’d like to accomplish as team player is bring some fresh leadership to the board. I’ve been thinking throughout the campaign, assessing the attitude in our various ethnic communities, based on their needs, I want what’s best for the kids. That’s why we’re called a ‘unified’ school district. I’m hoping things work out positive all the way around.”

In addition to voting for candidates, voters were also asked to weigh in on two measures to raise the sales taxes.

The Crescent City’s Measure S currently leads with 722 yes votes to 369 no votes. If passed by a simple 50 percent plus-one majority, the measure would raise the sales tax within the city limits by 1 cent. Officials said the measure would generate about \$1.3 million that would be used to create a hybrid fire department with volunteers and paid staff, maintain staffing levels at the police department, help keep the Fred Endert Municipal Pool open and repair city roads and potholes.

Greenough said he was happy to see Measure S on its way to passing.

“I want to make sure those funds go toward where the city states where it wants to use funds,” Greenough said.

He is definitely in favor of the Measure S funds going toward first responders — including an increase of staffing at the police department by two officers and an investigator and hiring fire captains to help the fire chief manage the Crescent Fire Protection District and the Crescent City Fire Department.

“The great thing about Measure S funds is they remain local,” Greenough added. “I’m looking forward to having citizen advisory committee work with the council to keep our feet to the fire. The more people involved in process, the better.”

Meanwhile, the future of the county’s Measure R is razor thin, with 4,003 yes votes and 3,988 no votes. It, too, needs a 50 percent plus-one margin to pass. County officials have said Measure R will generate about \$1.2 million for the county outside Crescent City limits and go toward maintaining emergency dispatch services, repairing potholes and streets, and mitigating public nuisances and blight.

