

Equipment failure slows Hills result

BY CASEY HANS
STAFF WRITER

The election dragged on into the early morning hours Wednesday for 37th District Court judicial candidates Maria Parker and Jack McDonald in this year's most competitive race.

Results were running close enough that Parker wasn't declared the winner until shortly after 8 a.m., 12 hours after the polls closed Tuesday.

The delay was due to mechanical ballot-counting problems in the Farmington Hills City Clerk's office.

"It seems this always happens to us in the Presidential elections," said city clerk Kathy Dor-

■ 'It seems this always happens to us in the Presidential elections.'

Kathy Dorman
city clerk

nan, who worked through the night with her staff until the election count was complete.

Dorman said the city had a similar equipment failure four years ago but then replaced its ballot counting equipment. The new equipment worked fine until early Wednesday morning, when it broke, leaving city precincts 2, 24, 25 and 28 and approximately

12,000 absentee ballots uncounted.

Deputy city clerk Sue Rose estimated that the mechanical snafu left about 16,000 ballots awaiting count, which was enough to cause both judicial candidates to wait for results before calling the race.

Complicating the matter was the city's record election turnout,

which was reported at more than 80 percent in some precincts.

McDonald and his supporters and Parker's campaign consultant Alan Feuer stayed at city hall until about 4 a.m. before going home to await a call from the clerk's office with the winner.

After the Hills equipment malfunctioned early Wednesday morning, Doubleday Co. brought in another machine from Ann Arbor which failed to scan the ballots properly. Another machine was then brought in to finish the job.

Clerks in neighboring Farmington, which was also included in the judicial race, tallied their numbers early in the morning on Wednesday.



Emergency trip: Tim Allshouse of Doubleday carries in a card reader from Ann Arbor to replace a broken one. At right is Naji Alkateeb. The new machine didn't work, either.

Court refuses to issue retraining order against school district

A Farmington Hills man lost in his 11th-hour court bid to get a restraining order against the Farmington Public Schools for sending home information about Proposal C, and agreed Monday to dismiss the case.

West side resident Richard DeVries filed the suit Friday in Oakland County Circuit Court through attorney William Hampton, requesting a restraining order against the district for sending home with his child a Hillside Elementary PTA flier that discussed the so-called "cut and cap proposal."

In his complaint, he opposed the use of school tax money to pay

PROPOSAL C

for such a flier.

DeVries is known locally because of his attempts to win a seat on the Farmington School Board during the past three years, and his challenges to the district's fiscal policies.

Hampton did not return calls to the Observer for comment. A proponent of Proposal C, DeVries said that school officials "are entitled to their opinion, too, but they're not entitled to use tax dollars" to oppose a political proposition.

DeVries claims the flier was printed on school-owned copy machines, using school paper and that it was put in with his child's school work by a school district employee.

School officials deny any wrongdoing, saying the information was through the Hillside Elementary School's PTA, and was informational in nature.

Oakland Circuit Court Judge Steven Andrews denied the motion for the restraining order Friday. On Monday, DeVries and his attorney agreed to enter an order dismissing the case without prejudice, after being told that Farmington school officials had

no intent to send home materials on Monday or on election day. School district attorney Kingsley Cotton defended the situation, saying the district had done nothing wrong.

"The district filed a response to the claims, vigorously denying that Farmington had done anything improper," he said. The attorney added that he "came close to demanding a hearing" on Monday to "demonstrate we had done nothing improper — that's important to us."

The hearing was not held, because of the plaintiff's motion to dismiss the case.

The single sheet announcing a PTA meeting to discuss the impact of Proposal C was reportedly sent home with one of DeVries' children with the student's weekly school work. DeVries said he complained to school officials both at Hillside and at the district's central office before deciding to file the suit.

DeVries said Monday he was upset that his child was used to bring home the flier. And although not noted in the suit, DeVries said he also was concerned with school district funded cable television shows which were anti-Proposal C.

Although he agreed to the dis-

missal, he called the action a "victory" because the district stopped sending materials home.

Cotton said that was a moot point because the school never intended to send materials home on Monday and Tuesday.

School board president Jack Inch and board vice president Cathleen Webb both said Saturday they were not aware of the situation. Inch declined comment, but Webb said she was sure the district is not at fault.

"He (DeVries) keeps us on track," she added. "We're very cautious about what we do. But I'll tell you the district is in no way involved in this."

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