

Challengers upset incumbents in Clarenceville board race

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Two challengers, Kirsten Galka and Sharon Simpson, swept past incumbents to claim the most votes in the two school districts serving Livonia, Ib., Clarenceville Public Schools, where Simpson unseated incumbent Ronald Silve to win a four-year term, residents also approved two tax questions that will generate \$660,000 a year in building fix-up money for the school district until the year 2008.

Clarenceville includes a southwest portion of Farmington Hills. After three losses at the polls and on her fourth try, Galka brushed past incumbent Frank Kikenakes to win a four-year term on the Livonia Board of Education.

Kikenakes came in second; he will serve another four-year term on the Livonia board.

"Some supporters have stuck with me for four years," Galka said Tuesday. "Why? They know I can make a difference, that I will talk about issues."

"They are relying on me. They are concerned that school board meetings are too staged, with hardly any questions asked. We need a bit more dialogue. I'll not be a rubber stamp."

The Livonia race brought 4,766 voters to the polls Monday, nearly 6 percent of the 80,894 registered voters in the city.

The total vote count is as follows: Galka, 1,833, or nearly 23 percent; Kikenakes, 1,910, or about 22 percent; Larry Naser, 1,731, or 20 percent; Karen Egan, 1,660, or 19 percent; and Kevin Whitehead, 1,174, or nearly 14 percent.

"The actual vote count was not known until Tuesday morning, as 21 ballots at one precinct got misplaced Monday night. However, Livonia's five candidates knew who the two winners were Monday night, since the 21 votes would not have changed the first or second place standing of the two top vote getters."

In Clarenceville, on her first try for a school board seat, Simpson won 283 votes, surpassing the 247 votes garnered by incumbent Matthew Boettcher, who also won a four-year term.

With 155 votes, Ronald Silve came in third, and lost a seat on Clarenceville's board.

Simpson, president of the Friends of Grandview for the last two years, got support from both her home school and Botsford, the second elementary in the district.

"I was pleased to see that," said Simpson. "I knew I had support at Grandview; I was happy to see Botsford parents voted for me."

With her win, Simpson said she also brings a mother's view to the board, which in the last year has been made up of seven fathers.

Clarenceville Superintendent Tom Tattian viewed successful passage of the two tax questions with "tremendous relief."

With 58 percent voters saying yes, residents agreed to hike the current "sinking fund" tax from

.75 mills to 2 mills.

By a closer 53 percent to 47 percent vote, residents agreed to extend the current 2004 tax expiration date four years, to 2008.

"We can now stick with our game plan," Tattian said. "We'll be able to do more projects sooner. It's a positive financial position for the district."

On June 24, the Clarenceville Board of Education will get Tattian's recommendations on how

the \$660,000 generated in 1999-2000 from the "sinking fund" should be spent.

The top four priorities he cited are:

■ Finish replacing windows in Clarenceville Middle School.

■ Start work on the Grandview Elementary bus loop, which is expected to ease traffic-safety concerns in the school parking lot.

■ Install security lighting on school buildings, parking lots and park-playground areas. "We have some lighting, but it's dull," Tattian said. Simpson said the new lighting will help thwart vandalism.

■ Replace boilers at Clarenceville High School.

A fifth project previously proposed, resurfacing the Botsford Elementary parking lot, will be

delayed until the city repairs a water line, Tattian said.

In Livonia, Galka said she hopes to keep the momentum going to lower class size.

She said she fears the cost of reinstating instrumental music will reduce money being set aside to lower class size.

"I don't want that to keep the district from pursuing smaller class sizes," she said.

Galka also said she has fielded numerous phone calls from

Garfield parents who oppose a four-room addition on the school.

She said she might ask fellow trustees to reopen talks on the issue.

"I know I can't control six people," she said. "My goal is to be a fact finder, work with other board members. I don't want to disagree all the time. I'm not there to take things apart."

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