

Hills from page A1

Molin (1,886) for the third and final spot for a four-year city council seat.

Incumbent Vicki Barnett and challenger Barry Brickner finished first and second respectively.

McRae enjoyed support of current council members. He credited a strong candidate's forum in the final week for giving him an edge.

In the Council of Homeowners Association debate Oct. 27, McRae refuted Oliverio's claim that council negotiations to develop the 11-Pines property were held behind closed doors.

He also challenged Oliverio's assertion that House Bill 4777, which city officials contend threatens home rule, was much ado about nothing.

"I tried to show during the forum that I try to stay up to date on the issues," McRae said, "so come Monday I can dive right in."

Barnett received 7,414 votes, which is 31 percent for her second four-year term. Brick-



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Vicki Barnett
—Re-elected councilwoman

ner captured 6,023 votes for 26 percent. Barnett and Brickner campaigned together. The incumbent was pleased to be returned to office.

"I'm really excited to be sitting on council with Barry Brickner and Chris McRae," Barnett said. "I think Nancy (Bates) will be a fine mayor. I'm going to miss (outgoing Mayor) Aldo (Vagozzi) terribly."

Brickner excitedly watched as returns flashed on a computer monitor at city hall. He commented with every new number.

"Oh, I'm dropping off a little bit," Brickner said.

As Barnett continued to roll up votes, he said, "You can't beat Vicki. She's just too tough. ... That incumbency thing helps."

With 21 of the 28 precincts counted, the planning commissioner knew he was in.

Aside from being a precinct delegate, the victory was Brickner's first for elected office.

"This means a little bit more," he said.

He's had unsuccessful runs for state House and state Senate. Barnett joked that a similar campaign tract is the recipe for success.

Brickner, Barnett and Vagozzi all ran unsuccessfully for state office before being elected to city council.

"This was a good campaign," Barnett said. "The tenor of this campaign was substantive and it was issue-oriented."

"All of my opponents would've served the city well."



For safety's sake

Safety: Farmington Hills firefighter Mike Garr checks a child protective car seat for Tere Ryan, holding her son Douglas. Sue Elssesser, of the Oakland County Health Department, assists in the inspections. Holiday Chevrolet, 30250 Grand River, will host a child car seat safety inspection 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday. Certified technicians, including those from the Farmington Hills Fire Department, will inspect child carriers to make they're safe and meet all standards. No appointment is necessary. Those unable to attend may phone the Farmington Hills Fire Department to set up a time to have a child seat checked.

Results from page A1

The contested race was decided by 968 of Farmington's 7,694 registered voters, an estimated 12.6 percent, said city Clerk Patsy Cantrell. The total includes 235 absentee voter ballots. Three charter amendments were also easily victorious (See related story).

"I'm just glad it's over and that I'll be able to serve another two years," said Mitchell. "That, for me, is what it's all about."

Concurring was McShane, first elected to the council in 1989.

"We have an intelligent group of voters," McShane said. "They looked at the candidates and the issues and made decisions based on who the leaders are in this community."

Reached at his Farmington home Wednesday morning, Dibert said he hoped his candidacy served as a wake-up call for council members that the city's future isn't as rosy as is being portrayed.

"Hey, we tried," Dibert said. "People obviously are content with the way things are. We knew it was an uphill battle (to win), but we tried to tell people about some of the issues."

"Either people didn't believe us or they chose to ignore us. ... I hope the three incumbents realized what the message was, that there are residents in this community who are concerned."

Doing more to attract businesses is a top priority, as far as Dibert is concerned.

"The city as a whole needs to create an atmosphere where (businesses) will want to be here," Dibert said. "Farmington should not be a drive-through community but a drive-to community."

Public endorsement

But McShane said the election results indicated that the public endorsed decisions being made by the council.

That includes the city's purchase of the landmark Civic Theatre — one decision targeted for criticism by Dibert during his campaign.

"It showed people's satisfaction with what we've been doing," McShane said. "It's obvious that we work hard and that we'll

work hard long into the future."

Even though Dibert ruffled some feathers — particularly Hartsack's — with his campaign literature, McShane said she is "always glad to see a challenger. He helped bring about good discussion, and that's always important, because it raises the (public's) level of awareness."

That had a marginal effect at the polls. Although a disappointment, the voter turnout was an improvement over 1997, the city's most recent local-only race. That year, noted Cantrell, 117 absentee votes were cast out of a total of 676.

"My feeling is we still have to run the campaign whether there's (going to be) a light turnout or a heavy turnout," said Mitchell, who won his third two-year council stint. "Given that it was pretty clear the ballot issues would pass, the real issue was four candidates running for three positions."

"But you have to put in the effort, and we had three great weekends to put in our campaigning."

Where is everybody?

The low voter turnout was evident at Precinct 8, the Farmington Training Center. Bill Helwig cast his vote around 7 p.m. and then chatted with precinct workers such as Jan Freude until nearly 7:20 p.m.

No one voted after Helwig. "I was number 77 voting (at Precinct 8)," said Helwig after leaving the center. "That's kind of a dismal turnout."

Including absentee voters, just 121 of the precinct's 1,459 registered voters (less than 9 percent) helped decide the election.

To illustrate, as the 8 p.m. deadline to vote drew near, a row of empty voting booths stared Freude and other precinct workers in the face.

"The only time we had a crowd was when a couple came in," joked one of Freude's colleagues.

But Freude, a volunteer working her first election for the city, said she intends to do it again.

"I think you meet a lot of interesting people, and I feel when you live in a community for a long time, you owe it something," Freude said.

Working elections, she said, is worthwhile despite the lack of activity. "The trouble is times have changed. There are a lot of two-income households. People are very busy" and sometimes can't make it to the polls.

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rate."

Otherwise Bates said, "I wish George well."

Barkisian, who recently resigned from the city's commission to increase voter participation, asked not to be contacted.

Instead he said he'd fax his post-election comments. He didn't.

If Bates had one lament, it was low voter turnout. Only 9,246 of the city's 55,214 registered voters took part.

"I called them back," she said. "It was just silly to have them outside in the cold with such a low turnout."

In Precinct 19 at East Middle School, only 156 of its 1,886 voters showed up by 7:30 p.m. An election worker blamed the weather and lack of a substantial money question on the ballot.

"The sad thing is people don't feel city government is worth coming out for," said Carol Fankas, 19th Precinct chairwoman.