

Referendum roundup

November 8, 2006

Glen Ellyn park projects get nod

The Glen Ellyn Park District's request for \$11.9 million in new money was leading handily Tuesday.

With 35 of 40 precincts reporting in unofficial totals, the "yes" votes were leading 54 percent to 46 percent.

If the lead holds, about \$2 million of the money will be spent on renovating Main Street Recreation Center, with \$2.5 million set aside for land acquisition and \$7.4 million planned for the construction of a new 45,000-square-foot recreation facility at Ackerman Park.

"I think if it continues the same way, it was obvious the change that was made was acceptable to the community," parks Executive Director Cory Atwell said of the fact the request was scaled back from a similar one last spring.

"That's obviously what the (residents) wanted to see, and it's going to be a good thing for the entire community," he said.

The earlier plan involved tearing down Main Street Recreation Center.

The likely approval means that the tax rate paid by property owners won't drop next year, as it would have had the ballot initiative failed. Instead, the rate will remain what it's been since a 1999 bond sale, and the payoff date will be rolled over to 2017.

- Hafsa Naz Mahmood

Wood Dale voters favor sales tax hike

Wood Dale shoppers will pay an extra cent on the dollar at most checkout lines beginning in July after voters approved a 1-percent sales tax increase.

With 15 of 16 precincts reporting, the measure was approved by a wide margin, with about 68 percent of voters agreeing to raise the overall sales tax paid in Wood Dale to 7.5 percent, in unofficial results.

Mayor Ken Johnson thanked voters for approving the increase the second time around after they rejected it during the March primary election.

"We're very thankful the voters came out and helped us tremendously," Johnson said. "It's always difficult to ask people to give even more money to local governments, but our citizens saw the need."

Fourth Ward Alderman Eugene Wesley said he was ecstatic that the aldermen did a better job getting the word out this time than in March.

All money raised by the sales tax, estimated to be almost \$3 million annually, must be used for capital improvements like street projects and upgrades to sewer systems and water mains.

City Manager Frank Williams said aldermen will now complete prioritizing projects to be funded by the increase.

The increase will not apply to groceries, medicine or big-ticket items like cars.

- Justin Kmitch

Bensenville OKs new fire district

Bensenville's fire trucks will have a new logo on their sides, but not much else is expected to change after voters approved a transition from a village fire department to a fire protection district.

With 93 percent of 14 precincts reporting in unofficial results, voters approved the establishment of a fire protection district in Bensenville that will have its own governing board independent of the village government.

About 65 percent of 1,509 voters approved the creation of the district while 54 percent of 1,504 voters approved funding the district's startup.

"Obviously this is the outcome that we were hoping for, and we think this will allow the taxpayers of Bensenville to have lower municipal taxes and allow them to have a say in the delivery of fire and emergency medical services in the village," Village Manager Jim Johnson said Tuesday night.

The village will now fund the startup of the new district, which goes into effect by Jan. 1, by abating \$3 million in property tax revenues to the new district.

Johnson said the village will now push to create the district "as fast as possible."

The village will then eliminate \$3 million of real estate taxes for property owners within the village, and a new line item for Fire Protection District No. 2 will appear on property tax bills.

- Justin Kmitch

No new firefighters in Winfield district

Winfield-area voters on Tuesday rejected a tax-increase request from the Winfield Fire Protection District to add three full-time firefighters to its staff.

With 96 percent of precincts reporting, unofficial totals showed 52 percent of voters rejecting the referendum.

The Winfield Fire Protection District asked voters for permission to lift the tax cap for each of the next four years to allow 12.5 percent tax increases. The tax cap limits increases to 5 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is less.

The request would have cost the owner of a \$300,000 home about \$24 in the first year, fire officials estimate. That same homeowner would have paid \$293 in additional taxes by the fourth year. Nearly 60 percent of voters rejected a similar tax-hike request in March.

- Jack Komperda

Winfield Township roads lose again

Voters on Tuesday rejected a tax-increase request from Winfield Township to pay for roadwork projects in unincorporated areas.

With all precincts reporting, unofficial totals showed 67 percent of 11,334 voters opposing the proposal.

The Winfield Township Road District asked voters to approve a 2-cent tax-rate increase per \$100 of equalized assessed property value to pay for paving and maintenance projects for 48 miles of roads in the township.

The tax-hike request would have generated an additional \$200,000 for the road district.

The owner of a \$300,000 home would have paid about \$20 more next year to the township.

Township voters rejected the same referendum request in March by a 2-to-1 margin.

- Jack Komperda

Vote looks close in Roselle fire district

Voters in the Roselle Fire Protection District were closely divided Tuesday on approving a tax rate increase, though it appeared to be heading toward a defeat.

"I am shocked that it's this close," Roselle Fire Protection Trustee Tommy King said. "It shows me that people didn't do their homework or they just don't care."

To help pay for increasing operational costs, the district was seeking a 13-cent property tax-rate increase, to 40 cents per \$100 of equalized assessed valuation, over a period of four years.

With 68 percent of 16 precincts reporting, 45 percent voted in favor and 54 percent opposed, in unofficial results.

If the measure does pull out a victory, the owner of a \$100,000 home in DuPage County will pay an extra \$44 in 2007, \$57 in 2008, \$70 in 2009 and \$86 in 2010. In Cook County, that same owner will pay an extra \$21 in 2007, \$23 in 2008, \$25 in 2009 and \$28 in 2010.

The district covers unincorporated areas near Roselle, Bloomingdale, Itasca, Elk Grove Village, Medinah and Schaumburg.

It was the fourth time in the past few years that the district asked for a tax rate increase. District officials had said they'd consider adopting new fees for services if they don't get more tax money.

- Kat Zeman

Township voters: Withdraw from Iraq

Voters in Downers Grove Township sent President Bush a message: Bring our troops home.

With 64 percent of precincts reporting unofficial vote totals, 55 percent of voters said they want soldiers out of Iraq.

The non-binding question asked: "Shall the U.S. government should immediately begin an orderly and rapid withdrawal of all military personnel from Iraq, beginning with the National Guard and reserves?"

Several other townships across Illinois posed a similar question on the pullout of U.S. troops, while others declined to place it on the ballot.

In August, DuPage County election officials refused to put it on the countywide ballot after noting that the petitions submitted contained only about 9,000 of the 21,000 signatures required by statute.

- Christy Gutowski and Kathryn Grondin