

City Council vote split

11-9-83



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Mike Rotkin and Jane Weed wear their victory grins

Progressives will retain 4-3 majority

By PAUL BEATTY
Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — In a cliff-hanger that had progressive politicians worried much of the night, city voters Tuesday ran it down to the wire before settling for a split decision that will keep a progressive majority on the City Council.

Although their challenge was strong, city moderates failed to break the progressive majority that has controlled the city the past two years.

Voters, however, did (barely) replace socialist Mayor Bruce Van Allen with progressive-feminist Jane Weed, who ran fourth in the field of eight candidates, according to the unofficial count.

Councilman Michael Rotkin ran third. He and Weed will join Councilmembers Mardi Wormhoudt and John Laird as a continuing progressive majority.

The moderates won a moral victory by having the two top vote-getters in Arnold Levine and Katy Sears-Williams. Lacking a third strong candidate, they failed to win the big prize of a majority vote.

The moderate slate was backed by the All Santa Cruz Coalition, which raised more than \$80,000 and hired professional campaigners to try to pull it off.

The coalition hired Marathon Communications from Los Angeles and campaign manager Jeff Montgomery. Their campaign was called both "technically excellent" and "unnecessary in Santa Cruz politics" by different observers.

The tab on the moderate side came to around \$100,000, including funds the individual candidates spent and money spent by supporting organizations.

Progressives spent between \$40,000 and \$50,000 to hold the necessary two seats for their majority.

Overall, it was a plush campaign to win council seats that pay \$50 a month.

The final tab showed Levine got 8,941, Sears-Williams, 8,570; Rotkin, 8,460; Weed, 8,205; Bruce Van Allen, 8,171; Bill Fieberling, 8,035; Jim Felich, 7,752, and Ed Porter got 7,717.

Turnout was about 57 percent, higher than past city elections but far less than had been predicted in some circles. Predictions during the heat of the campaign had reached as high as 70 percent.

Please see Page A3

Two-two split in City Council race

Continued from Page A1

Carryover Councilman Spiro Mellis will have two new faces in his minority with Levine and Sears-Williams. Two members of the minority, Councilmen Joseph Ghio and John Mahaney are leaving the council after two terms, since the city charter prohibits a consecutive third term.

The election scene at county center where the progressives do their watching was hushed and nervous as the first returns showed the moderates were leading with substantial margins.

Over in the Sierra Room at Holiday Inn, one hundred or so moderates were beginning their celebration with their analysts saying, "We've got the lead and we think we can hold."

At the 11 p.m. count, the lead evaporated for two of their candidates, leaving Levine and Sears-Williams as nearly-safe winners and dropping Fieberling and Felich out of the race.

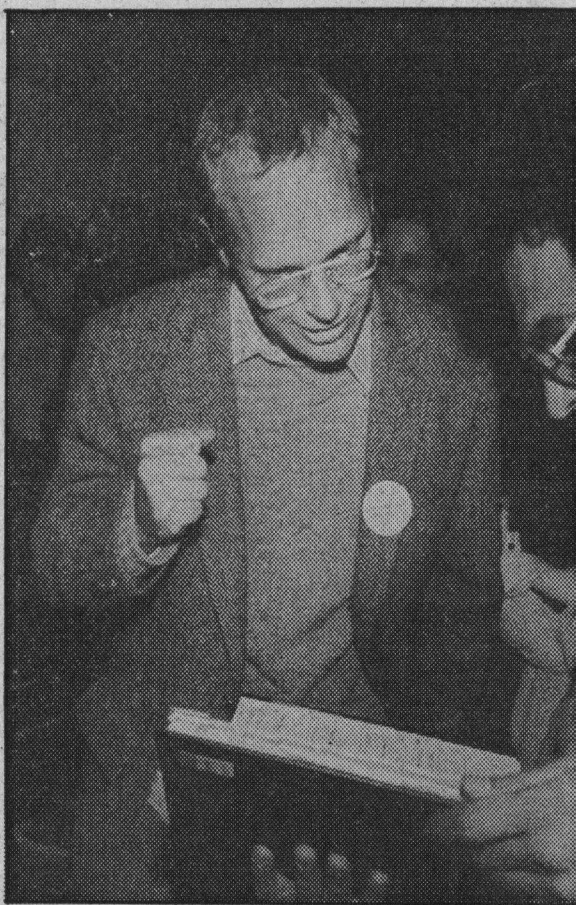
The mood changed and moderates were asking, "What do we have to do to get rid of them?"

One progressive analyst said that while the moderates were credited with having an expensive and highly technical campaign, their real strength was that some of their members had turned the campaign into a moral crusade that was very effective.

At the County Center cafeteria, where the votes were recorded on an overhead projector, progressives early were assuring each other "some of our best precincts aren't in yet" and worrying if the moderate challenge this time had the steam to make it through the night.

"It's a cliff-hanger for sure," they were saying.

Conservative County Supervisor Wayne Moore was saying the outcome of the city election would be a bellwether for next year's supervisors' races in



Van Allen hopes in vain for a comeback.

mid-county, where Supervisor Robley Levy will run, and in San Lorenzo Valley, where Supervisor Joe Cucchiara will run.

Cucchiara disagreed: "It's different issues; different people and a different time."

Then the 11 p.m. printout came out the computer room and the exuberance at Holiday Inn magically left and took up residence at County Center for the rest of the night.

When the results showed that two moderates and two progressives had won, a few people said, "Well so much for the idea the town votes for slates."

However, the precincts show the vote was along slate lines, and the town is about evenly divided.

"It's a four-to-three town," County Supervisor Gary Patton said.

An observer chipped in, "It's a highly polarized town."

Weed told her happy supporters, "I'm very proud of the entire community for its outpouring of help; the progressive community is strong in Santa Cruz."

Rotkin, feeling the close challenge that had just failed in its pursuit, said, "There's a lot of work for progressives to do in the next two years."

Retiring Councilman Joseph Ghio said he expects the new progressive majority will be more cautious than the one that came to power two years ago and got into trouble with rent control, a just eviction ordinance and an unpopular street barrier on California Street.

Councilwoman Mardi Wormhoudt said, "Considering they spent \$100,000, this is a tremendous victory for the progressives."

Van Allen recieved tremendous applause from his supporters, telling them, "I have mixed feelings. I'll be back."

Over at Holiday Inn, Sears-Williams was saying

she was happy she won, but wished all four moderates had been elected. "We're going to make a difference in this town; we're going to win it back," she promised.

Levine took the microphone to thank his people. Soon after that he showed up at county center to give Rotkin a victory hug.

Levine said the campaign experience was good, except for some of the acidic campaign mail that came in the last four days.

"To have mail come to you own house and open it to read that you're a fraud and a liar, I didn't like that."

One observer said, "That sounds like my mail from my mother."

Campaigning was tough and came down to the moderates saying the socialists and progressives were giving the city a bad name.

Progressives were saying the moderates want to open the town to more industrial development.

The moderates opposed Measure A, an attempt to have the city control UCSC's proposed high-tech park, and the progressives strongly supported it. Measure A passed with 72 percent of the vote.