

Spotty turnout of voters

Workers keep eye on polls

By CHELA ZABIN
STAFF WRITER

Turnout for Watsonville's first city elections under the court-ordered district system was mixed this morning, according to poll workers.

The largest turnout this morning was in districts 6 and 7. In District 7, at Precinct No. 71, 105 people had voted by 9:40 a.m., and at No. 72, 87 voters had come out by about 9:50 a.m.

Workers at No. 71 called the turnout, which was close to 10 percent of the registered voters in that precinct, "very good." There was an eight-person line at Precinct No. 72, at the Pajaro Village Clubhouse, shortly after 10 this morning, but Inspector Velma Hamblin called the turnout there, also close to 10 percent of that precinct's voters, "fair" compared to what she's seen at other precincts in other elections.

District 6 also had a large turnout this morning, with 93 people having voted at Precinct No. 61, All Saints' Episcopal Church, by 9:30, and 16 at the First Baptist Church by 7:30.

There were poll watchers from various campaigns watching the voting at a number of the polling places, but none were being so carefully watched as those in heavily Latino districts 1 and 2.

At District 2's sole polling place, the Watsonville Public Library, a handful of people sat at a table across from the polls, taking photographs of the voters.

Poll worker Hazelle Cissna said she'd called City Clerk Lorraine Washington about the situation, but that Washington told her there was nothing illegal about what the poll-watchers were doing. Cissna said she thought their presence was annoying to the voters.

One of the two people still watching when a reporter approached said the poll watchers were just keeping an eye out for voter fraud. Workers from Dan Dodge's campaign have accused candidate Oscar Rios of registering people who are not citizens and say they intend to challenge the votes.

At the library, 52 people out of 811 had voted by about 10 o'clock. Poll workers said there were also about 140 absentee voters. About



Kurt Ellison

Enrique Martinez voted this morning in District 5's Callaghan Park polling place as his daughters Vanessa, center, and Lisette wait for him.

four people had come in to vote whose names weren't on the books, Cissna said.

Meanwhile, on the corner of Union and Trafton streets, District 2 candidate Oscar Rios shook hands with passers-by and called out to pedestrians coming out of the Watsonville Library. Watsonville Police Capt. Charles

Carter was among the well-wishers.

Wearing sunglasses and a suit, Rios said late this morning he'd been at the site, kitty-corner from the Watsonville Plaza, since 7 a.m. "And I'm gonna be here all day," he declared. A campaign photographer with still and video cameras stood alongside him

while other campaign photographers recorded the last hours of the campaign from their stations throughout the block.

"My opposition has been so dirty," he said, referring to false charges made this fall that Rios was not an American citizen, and thus ineligible to run for office.

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The turnout was "steady" at District 1's Precinct No. 11 at Marty Franich Ford, Inspector Winnie Roumimper said. At 10:30 a.m., 42 voters had cast their ballots. Some 600 are registered in that precinct.

Jon Silver and several others from Cruz Gomez's campaign were watching the polls at the Ford dealership.

Only 19 people had turned out at Precinct No. 12 in District 1 by 10:15 a.m., Inspector Pauline Torrecillas said. Approximately 520 voters are registered at that precinct. About 140 were sending in absentee ballots.

"It's very slow, but it'll pick up later" after people come home from work, she said.

Turnout was "yucky" at District 3's Precinct No. 31, said Inspector Edith Scrivani, explaining that things were quite a bit slower than she'd expected. At 8:40 this morning, 38 people out of 619 registered had voted there. Thirty-six had voted at Precinct No. 32 at Redding Title, where 1,014 were registered.

At the First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Precinct No. 41 in District 4, 31 of the 723 voters had come out by 9:10 a.m.

"I think it's a little slower than yesterday," adding that she thought things would pick up later in the day. Many of the people in District 4 are seniors, who may not have made it to the polls yet, she said.

Lee Beerhohm, inspector at Precinct No. 43, attributed the slow turnout to the morning cold. At 9:05, about 40 had come out.

Voters in District 5 voted at Precinct No. 51 at Callaghan Park. Things were pretty steady there, Inspector Louise Ziesing said. Sixty of the 1,142 registered voters had showed up by about 9:20, and there were a large number of absentee voters, she said.