

2018 POA Board Election—Jerry Yeric

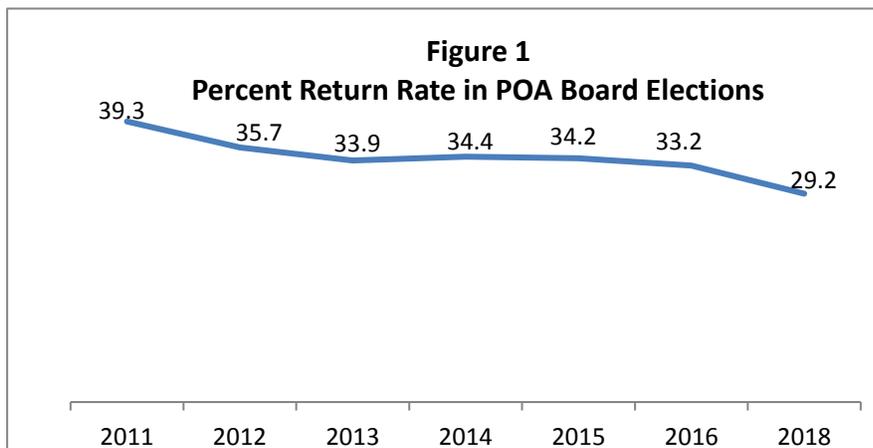
Elections are the foundation of democratic governance. As pointed out in the CMP, the village operates as a quasi-municipal government. Moreover, the function and responsibilities of boards have drastically changed with the withdrawal of Cooper Communities. This change is clearly reflected in the electoral process for the board members are held more accountable and are called upon to make more decisions than past boards. There are two components to elections. The first is straightforward—who won and who lost. The second is not, for it attempts to explain why, and by its nature is difficult for there are a number of reasons and some may not be rational, reasonable or understandable. This said, there are several observations that can be made regarding the POA board election that contributes to our understanding of the election. Aside from the results, there are three areas that place the results in a broader context. They are: (1) the percentage of eligible voters who cast a vote—turnout. (2) How the votes were distributed between resident and non-resident property owners, and finally, (3) The role of incumbency..

Results

Nancy Luehring and Buddy Dixon were separated by 2 votes in total votes, each receiving 24.3 percent. Cindi Erickson was the third member elected with 19.5 percent of the total vote, followed by two incumbents, Marcy Mermel at 18.8 percent and George Parker at 13 percent.

Turnout

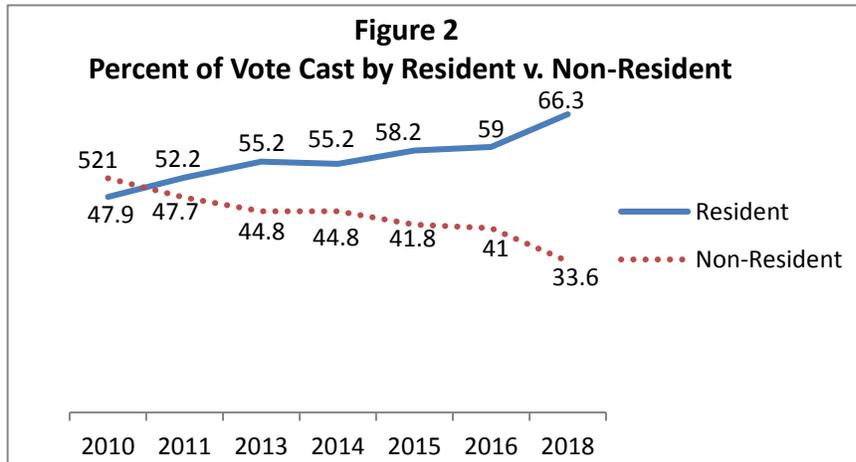
Turnout is the critical element in all elections for both a practical and theoretical reason. The practical component is that a candidate cannot win without those who favor their candidacy going to the polls and casting a vote. The theoretical facet concerns the health of the democratic process for the larger the turnout the more likely the vote reflects the will of the people and not a small sub-set. There are two aspects to this issue that need to be addressed. The first is seen in Figure 1 and that is the percent of property owners in good standing who voted. As the figure



indicates there has been a ten percent decline in voting since 2011. This election had the lowest turnout during the period with 29.2 percent returning their ballot. There were 23,599 ballots mailed which was 102 more than in last board election in 2016. The second question,

frequently a topic of public discourse, is the inordinate control of the non-resident property

owner over the election of the board. However, the data clearly do not support this contention. Since the 2010 election, the majority of ballots have been cast by resident property owners and the 2018 election indicates that this pattern has markedly increased. As Figure 2 indicates, the percent of the vote cast by residents was 66.3 percent compared to the non-resident vote of 33.6



percent. The significance of this distribution is not only the impact resident voters have on board elections, but it also provides valuable insight into the changing nature of the community in a broader context. Whereas in the past non-resident voters voted at a higher rate than residents, that

pattern was reversed after the 2010 election. It should be noted that in the 2010 election the winning candidates received more votes from residents than non-residents. The significance of this figure goes beyond the numbers for it illustrates the changing nature of the electorate and that they are predominately our neighbors. It also indicates the changing role of the board since it, not the developer, is viewed as final the decision-maker. In the past there was always the outside developer (Cooper) who was viewed as the ultimate decision-maker; those days are past and now the burden falls to the actions of the board.

Incumbency

Being an incumbent is perceived as an advantage in elections and there is an abundance of research to support this contention at all levels of government. However, the history of incumbents being re-elected in HSV is quite different. Since 2000 there have been eleven candidates who have sought re-election to the POA Board in a contested election¹. Only four have succeeded (Breckon and Shoemaker in 2006, and Adkins and Linam in 2008). The remaining seven have been unsuccessful in their re-election (Wolfe, in 2006, Jackson in 2010, Feather and Brandt in 2012, Bateman in 2015, and Mermel and Parker in 2018). In the past two contested elections where incumbents sought re-election, they were unsuccessful. Two of the three carried the resident vote (Bateman and Mermel) but lost the non-resident vote. The remaining five unsuccessful candidates each received more non-resident votes than resident votes. To place some perspective on this, the number of votes that separated the lowest winning candidate's total from the next candidate was calculated in all elections from 1984-2018². The 2018 election had the 4th lowest difference with 135 votes separating the winning candidate

¹ Mike Medica was re-elected in 2017 without opposition.

² Data were not available for 1999 and 2004 elections, and in 1987 and 2016 were uncontested election.

Erikson from Mermel. The other three elections were in 1984 with a 108 vote margin separating the two candidates, 2000 with an 84 vote margin, and the narrowest margin of victory was in 1990 where only 15 votes made the difference between being elected. All votes matter, and in close elections, this is magnified.

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