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Minneapolis Elections

BY HAMZA ISMAIL

THE MINNEAPOLIS ELECTIONS are wrapping up across the month of November. Voters will vote on several new candidates and bills as the polls open on November 2nd. The Mayor of Minneapolis, the City Council, and other amendments will be presented to voters.

For the Mayoral office, Jacob Frey is running for reelection. Frey is running against thirteen other candidates for the position. Each candidate presents their views and policies on several key aspects, such as rent, budgeting, and public safety. As of now, Jacob Frey is the unofficial winner, beating out the thirteen other candidates.

There are several new amendments that voters can vote on this year. One is the “strong mayor amendment”. This amendment, if passed, would give the mayor more executive authority over the functions of the city. Minneapolis has a weak mayor and strong council system, so if this bill passes, it will give the mayor more administrative duties. The second amendment that voters can vote on is the Yes 4 Minneapolis. If the bill is passed, this means that the Minneapolis Police would be replaced in the city’s constitution with a new Department of Public Safety. The last amendment featured on the ballot is rent control. Voters can vote on whether the city of Minneapolis will add rent control and a ceiling to the city’s constitution.

To wrap up, the City Council seats are open to the voters. New faces are presented as all of the Wards, one to thirteen are up for election. An unofficial count has been released for all wards except for one. In Ward 2, Robin narrowly won Ward 2; however, she won by a margin of nineteen votes. Yusra Arab, the runner-up, announced her intentions to request for a formal recount. She stated on her campaign Twitter that “The outcome is one of the closest margins Minneapolis has ever experienced in a city council race using rank choice voting.” Since the margin is so close, Robin’s 4,056 compared to Yusra’s 4,037. A member of her team stated that “We are going through the proper channels in order to ensure that all voices are heard and accounted for. A good sign of a robust democracy is to ensure transparency and fairness.” Both parties are in the process of a formal recount which will take place in the upcoming days.

Saint Paul Election Results

BY ETHAN LANGEMO

ON TUESDAY, November 2nd, 2021, the city of Saint Paul, Minnesota held an election to decide the offices of mayor, as well as a vote on new city-wide regulation on rental housing increase limits. Besides mayoral incumbent Melvin Carter III, seven other candidates vied for the winning vote. These individuals were (in order of vote totals) Dino Guerin (7,454 votes), Paul Langenfield (5,298 votes), Bill Hosko (3,243 votes), Dora Jones-Robinson (2357 votes), Miki Frost (2,069 votes), Abu Nayeem (1516 votes), and Scott Evans Wergin (355 votes). All seven non-incumbents ran as independent candidates, while Carter was the only one affiliated with a political party (DFL). Carter won the race, taking in 36,426 of the votes (about 61% of the total vote).

The vote for the ordinance on rent control was a much tighter vote, in which a YES vote was in support of the new restriction that limits annual rent increases to 3%, and a NO vote was not. There were 30,965 votes (about 53%) for YES, and 27,581 votes (about 47% for no). This vote was perhaps the most controversial on the ballot. On one hand, having a stable rent to pay is certainly nice, and makes renting a housing property a little more comfortable since you know what to expect. On the other hand, the ordinance could be disastrous for the housing market as a whole, in that historically speaking, rent controls can sometimes decrease both the quantity and quality of available housing. What makes this even worse is the fact that the ordinance does not make new housing projects exempt from the restriction. Normally, buildings only become subject to rent control after a certain period of time, usually a number of years or buildings constructed before a certain date; but this is not the case here. The ordinance also lacks any form of time frame regarding when the restriction will come into action, resulting in more confusion and uncertainty.

If Saint Paul wants to continually increase the amount of housing available for rent, it will most likely need to make some sort of exemption system, particularly for new projects. Due to these tight restrictions, it will be easy for developers to choose to start projects in other cities where conditions will be more favorable for them. Already, several housing development projects have been paused and potential projects have withdrawn due to the lack of exemption. The re-elected Mayor Carter has spoken about trying to get an exemption for new projects so that developers can continue to provide new housing in the city, though no tangible action has been taken yet. For now, the future of Saint Paul’s housing sector is up in the air.

