



**CHARTER CITY AND ELECTION ISSUES
SUBCOMMITTEE AGENDA REPORT
MEETING DATE: MAY 13, 2024
FROM: Ingrid Padilla, City Clerk
SUBJECT: Election Issues**

Purpose

Provide information to subcommittee members on by-district elections using two small cities as a case study.

Background

At the 4/25/24 Elections Issues Subcommittee Meeting, staff was directed to bring back an update on how the City of Solvang and City of Ojai are faring after making the switch from electing their city councilmembers from at large elections to by-district elections.

Discussion

The City of Solvang held their first by-district election in November 2022. At this election, one councilmember won by 11 votes in their district and one former Councilmember lost in the District race.

The City of Ojai held their first by-district election in 2020. In this election, a former City Councilmember won the District race. In the November 2022 elections, district maps were redrawn. Two measures impacting the shape of Ojai's future city elections were also on the ballot.

- Measure L, which failed, would have returned the City Council to an elected five-member panel with the mayor's post rotating among council members. Some 1,876 residents voted against it, or more than 54%, while 1,593 voted in favor.
- Measure M, which passed, will change future council elections by abandoning district-based seats in favor of ranked-choice ballots that allow for an instant runoff. The measure passed with more than 55% of voters, or 1,909 in favor, while 1,510 were opposed. The new framework will start with the November 2024 general election.

Attachments:

1. City of Solvang Election November 2022 Results
2. City of Ojai Election November 2020 & November 2022 Results

Ingrid Padilla

Ingrid Padilla, City Clerk

City of Solvang Election November 2022 Results

November 2022 Election Results

City of Solvang Mayor

Mark L. Infanti: 1,138 (94.68%)

Write-In: 64 (5.32%)

City of Solvang City Council Member – District 3

David Brown: 81 (47.65%)

V. Louise Smith: 70 (41.18%)

Janice Mathews: 18 (10.59%)

Write-In: 1 (0.59%)

City of Solvang City Council Member – District 4

Elizabeth Orona: 220 (57.14%)

Robert Clarke: 165 (42.86%)*

Write-In: 0 (0.00%)

*During, the first Council meeting of 2023, the Solvang City Council discussed how to approach the seat left vacant by newly elected Mayor Mark Infanti, as two years remain on his City Council member term. The motion to appoint Robert Clarke to fill the vacancy passed after a 3-1 vote, with Elizabeth Orona dissenting.

City of Ojai Election* Results

*Election Sequence as Outlined in Ordinance 889

District 4: Commencing with the general municipal election in November 2020 and every 4 years

District 1, 2, & 3: At the November 2022 election and every 4 years

November 2020 Election Results

Betsy Stix and Suza Francina won their races for mayor and City Council in Ojai, according to election results released Tuesday night.

Mayor Race

Stix, a teacher, ran against William Weirick, a current city councilmember. The mayor's seat is a two-year term.

Tuesday's election marked the third time in city history that Ojai residents directly elected their own mayor. Prior to 2016, the mayor was chosen by the City Council.

- Betsy Stix 2,877 Votes (64.12%)
- William Weirick 1,610 Votes (35.88%)

Total Votes: 4,487

Ojai District 4

Two candidates also vied for a City Council seat in the city's first district-based election. Current city councilmember Suza Francina maintained a lead against real estate broker Jeri Becker to represent residents in the city's newly created District 4.

- Jeri Becker 506 votes (42.63%)
- Suza Francina 681 votes (57.37%)

Total Votes: 1,187

November 8, 2022 Election Results

The 2022 election saw the implementation of updated City Council Districts, a move that is required by the federal government in conjunction with the Census every 10 years, the re-election of Mayor Betsy Stix and the election of three new Council Members.

- Mayor Betsy Stix holds a two-year, at large term (2022-2024)
- Mayor Pro Tem Suza Francina represents District 4 through 2024
- Council Member Rachel Lang represents District 2 (2022-2026)
- Council Member Leslie Rule represents District 1 (2022-2026)
- Council Member Andrew Whitman represents District 3 (2022-2026)

District 1

The 1st District, which covers a central section of the city, had no incumbent.

- Leslie Rule won the seat with 338 votes, or nearly 49% of the total.
- Michelle Pineiro followed with 321 votes.
- A third candidate on the ballot, Lorelei Korn Grace, chose not to campaign but still garnered 31 votes.

District 2

Ojai's 2nd District, which includes the city's northeast, saw challenger Rachel Lang edge out incumbent Randy Haney.

- Lang had 466 votes, or more than 47% of the total. Haney had 431, or a little less than 44%.
- Haney initially led, but Lang later emerged as the frontrunner as more votes were tallied.
- A third candidate, Kathryn Donwen, had 85 votes.

District 3

In the northwest 3rd District, which had no incumbent, Andrew Whitman won with commanding lead of more than 18 percentage points.

- Whitman had 536 votes, or more than 59% of the total, while Carol "Renee" Roth had 370, or nearly 41%.

Measures L and M

Two measures impacting the shape of Ojai's future city elections were also on the ballot.

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Official Recount Results For Election Results Certification For the Office of Ojai City Mayor In The November 8, 2022 Election

The certified results for the election were announced on December 7, 2022 with the following vote count:

Elizabeth Stix	1,823 votes
Anson Williams	1,781 votes

The results of the recount held December 16-21 confirmed the original vote count results:

Elizabeth Stix	1,823 votes
Anson Williams	1,781 votes

The recount cost was estimated at \$28,500, requiring an initial deposit of \$8,000 and a daily rate of \$5,500 to be paid as the recount progressed.