

Measure P passes by nearly two thirds

By **David Richards**

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It's not official yet, but it's looking that way.

Voters in Tuesday's special election voted 64.3 percent in favor of Measure P, which will unify the Yosemite Joint Union High School District with the Coarsegold Union School District.

Results are unofficial until after the 28-day period counties have to certify the election.

Stephanie Sibley, elections division manager for Madera County, said the results don't include any absentee ballots turned into polling locations Tuesday.

"We still have a lot of votes to tally," Sibley said.

While Measure P looks to have passed with 4,390 of Madera and Mariposa county voters in favor and 2,439 against, the race for the new district's board of trustees is not as settled.

Out of the eleven candidates seeking the five board seats, Priscilla Pike leads all candidates with 3,268 votes, while Gregory Schoonard has 3,029, John Reynolds has 3,001, Christine Wilder has 2,977, Monika Moulin has 2,657 and Ron Bucheger is sixth with 2,615.

Pike is a member of the Yosemite district's board of trustees, while Schoonard, Reynolds and Wilder are members of the Coarsegold district's board of trustees. Bucheger is a member of the Bass Lake Joint Union Elementary School District's board and Moulin is a local church music director.

Bill McCabe, superintendent of both the Yosemite and Coarsegold districts, said both school boards will continue unchanged until the unification becomes official July 1, 2006.

McCabe added that members of the new board will take oath at the first meeting in December that has yet to be scheduled and will work on a variety of issues until the board takes over for the other two July 1.

"The task they have at hand is large," McCabe said. "We have a lot of work to do in six months."



Lynn Roberts of Oakhurst took time out on Tuesday to vote. "Everyone should be responsible to vote and do their part," he said.

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Paul He

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Dr. Bill

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Daniel I

Cathie

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Tom Eli

Jim Fla

J.R. Frc

Grace C

Bryan C

Mike H

Al Joya

Tony Ki

Ed Lyor

David F

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First order of business, McCabe said, will be for the board to name the new district, and to continue working with the other two governing boards in the transition period, including closing out the old districts.

The new board will also have to secure interim funding, which will come from the state, McCabe said.

"Another thing they have to do is adopt an interim budget for the six-month period and then they have to adopt the budget for the subsequent year," he said. "Then they have to establish a permanent address and a calendar for 2006-2007."

It doesn't stop there.

Also among the new tasks for the board will be to name a superintendent for the new district.

McCabe said the board could choose to appoint the current superintendent, which is himself, or select to open up the position for advertisement.

Among the other items the board will have to decide on over the next six months, McCabe said, will be to secure interim insurance coverage for the new district, secure a support staff for the new district operation, file for federal and state employer id applications and adopt board policies.

McCabe has been a strong supporter of the unification between the two districts.

"This unification is due to the hard work of a lot of dedicated people who are in our community, including parents and educators," he said. "I believe it will ultimately help us raise the academic programs which are available to our students."

Other residents have expressed disapproval for Measure P, including John M. Kearney of Coarsegold, who said he didn't feel it was right that other mountain communities, such as Ahwahnee, Fish Camp, Bass Lake and Oakhurst, have a vote for what's best for Coarsegold.

"I feel the same way as I did before it was voted on," he said. "There's nothing I can do about it other than live with it. I still think it's wrong."

In the special election, voter turnout for all of Madera County was 48.9 percent, while the turnout for Mariposa County was 59.1.

Also on the ballot were eight statewide propositions, which were all failing at the close of polls Tuesday night.



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