

Written by Harry Colbert, Jr.

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FRIDAY, NOV. 8 – Nov. 5, 2013 will be remembered as a day of history and infamy in Minnesota elections – Minneapolis in particular.

For the first time in a major election, voters took to the polls faced with a ranked choice voting ballot and an absurd number of candidates – 35 to be exact – vying to become Minneapolis' next mayor. The combination meant a 17-inch long ballot for voters and days of tabulations for city elections officials. At the time of press, while it is presumed that Betsy Hodges will be named the city's mayor elect, the results were not yet official after a staggering 15 rounds of ballot counting and Hodges was about 10,000 votes shy of being named the victor even though her closest challenger, Mark Andrew already conceded.

As a first choice, Hodges received more than 36 percent of the vote with Andrew garnering just under 25 percent of the vote. According to the Minneapolis City Clerk Casey Carl, tabulation will continue until either one candidate has 50 percent of the total vote or the field has been narrowed to the top two vote getters, in which case there would be a special run-off election.

Following the madness with tabulation, the Minneapolis Charter Commission voted to raise the candidate filing fee from \$20 to \$500 – the fee that is in place in neighboring St. Paul. Carl said while some may feel the fee would disenfranchise some from the political process, most voters would welcome the change.

“With 108 candidates total on the ballot and 35 for mayor, that’s a long ballot,” said Carl. “Even the most dedicated of voter will say, ‘wow, that’s a challenge.’”

In an overcrowded field for mayor, two prominent Northsiders did not fare as well as had hoped. Former City Council President Jackie Cherryhomes only managed about 4.5 percent of the first choice vote, while former councilman Don Samuels was able to get more than 10 percent of the first selection vote, but still well short of the number of votes needed to capture the nod. Samuels fared well as the voters' second choice, gaining 14,170 second choice votes, a total only bested by Hodges, who captured 14,399 second choice votes.

Though it seems Hodges' selection as Minneapolis' next mayor is a formality, she has yet to declare victory, but several of her fellow candidates have issued concessions.

“While the election results are not final and the Ranked Choice Voting process has not been completed, it is apparent that City Councilmember Betsy Hodges will be elected the next mayor

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of Minneapolis,” said Cherryhomes. “I want to congratulate Betsy for her victory and wish her the best as mayor.”

Andrew, the closest challenger to Hodges, offered a concession the night of the election. The following day he issued congratulations to Hodges via his Facebook page.

“I spoke with Mayor-elect Hodges on the phone and congratulated her on her well-earned victory in yesterday’s election,” said Andrew on his Facebook page. “We ran an incredible campaign but in the end, we just couldn’t shake her (Hodges). Betsy was tenacious, determined and she peaked at the right time. These assets will serve her well as she transitions into her new role as leader of our City. I have offered my friendship and support in pursuit of elevating Minneapolis to its next level of greatness.”

In Minneapolis’ 6th Ward, Abdi Warsame made history becoming the city’s first elected Somali-American to city council. Warsame, who was DFL and labor endorsed, captured more than 40 percent of first choice votes and 20 percent of the second choice votes.

In a statement on Warsame’s Facebook page the councilman elect said his victory was a victory for all 6th Ward residents, which has the largest concentration of Somali-Americans.

“As I’ve said from the beginning, this campaign was about community - about us,” said Warsame in his Facebook message. “Thank you to our volunteers and supporters. You took ownership over this campaign. You educated, organized, and empowered yourselves. You were relentless and reliable, and I am humbled to have been elected to serve you. I will spend my time as a Council Member honoring your support and continuing to work toward an innovative, equitable, and inclusive Minneapolis where everyone has a chance to succeed.”

History was also made in Minneapolis’ 5th Ward where Blong Yang was elected to serve as the ward’s councilman. Yang is Hmong-American, making him the first to serve on the council once he is sworn in. Yang bested fellow DLFers Ian Alexander and Brett Buckner and Green Party candidate Kale Severson.

In Ward 9 Alondra Cano led 41% to Ty Moore’s 38% and though official election results may not be available till Monday, observers are saying that Cano will be the Ward 9 City Councilwoman. Neither Cano nor Moore met the threshold to claim victory so the contest continues with ranked choice distributions until one of the candidates meets the threshold of 50% +1. Pundits are betting Cano will surpass the threshold before Ty Moore. Cano will become the first Mexican-born person elected to Minneapolis City Council.

In St. Paul things were far less dicey for the city’s top job as Mayor Chris Coleman was easily elected to another term. But in a hotly contested special election for councilperson in the city’s 1st Ward, a reallocation of votes has been called with Dai Thao leading with 1,346 votes to Noel Nix’s 1,165, Johnny Howard’s 727 votes and Debbie Montgomery’s 681 votes. A threshold of 2,384 votes is needed to declare a winner in that race. A reallocation had been set for Monday (Nov. 11).

Coleman wins in St. Paul, Hodges presumptive Mayor of Minneapolis; Warsame, Yang, and Cano make Ci

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The 1st Ward seat was vacated by Melvin Carter III, who took a position with the Minnesota Department of Education.