



# Off the top

Phil Tracy

## Prop. A: Rube Goldberg wrote this referendum

Over the course of time, San Francisco's referendum process has been used to implement many a strange idea. In the '60s, of course, they tried to end the war in Vietnam a couple of times. Back in '84, they used a referendum to try to ban shadows from the parks. Then there was the one that gave a police officer, Bob Geary, the right to perform with his wooden dummy, Brendan O'Smarty. Or the one to sell the cross on Mount Davidson to the Council of Armenian American Churches for \$26,000.

But never has the referendum process been put to more outlandish purpose than the one incorporated in the recently successful Proposition A, the instant election runoff proposition.

Like all mutton-headed proposals, this one was pushed as a reform. Ed Harrington, our city controller, who normally can't tell you the price of a paperclip without qualifying it, pinpointed the savings involved at precisely \$1.6 million per runoff. The Board of Supervisors backed it because they see voters in general elections as more liberal and ethnic than those who show up for the runoff. The good government types were in favor on the ground it promoted democracy. Last November, for example, almost 30% of the voters showed up for the election, while only 16.6% made it to the runoff.

The proposition reduces the election to a four-round trigonometry exercise. Assuming that no majority (50% plus 1) is achieved in the first round, then the candidate who placed lowest, or fourth, is eliminated and those people who voted for him or her have their second vote distributed among the remaining three candidates. If there's still no majority, then a third round is instituted. But some people who voted for the newly departed third highest candidate may have voted the long-departed fourth candidate as their second choice. So their third choice is counted. And if their second and third choices have departed, then their fourth choice counts. Still with me? Why they bothered to stop at four is anybody's guess.

And who, you may wonder, is being asked to carry out this incredibly protracted and confusing procedure in a timely and errorless manner? None other than the San Francisco Department of Elections. We may never have another election in which there is a declared winner.

For those of you recently returned from the planet Mars, let me mention a few salient facts about the Department of Elections. There have been five separate departmental directors in the last five years. The past three have had zero previous experience running elections. There's an ongoing state investigation of the November 2000 election and a canvassing of those votes remains outstanding. Last November's election featured the removal of absentee ballots from City Hall (anthrax scare), 240 uncounted ballots three weeks after the final count was announced, absentee ballot box covers floating in the bay that washed up on beaches, and 200 blank ballots that turned up a month later. All this in an election where the question of public power was decided by 533 votes. Supposedly.

Department Director Tammy Haygood herself is something of an issue. An attorney and engineer, she was hired last summer when all nine of the candidates who applied failed to have any election experience. Her background was quality control specialist. One of her recent assignments was reviewing procedures at a diaper manufacturing plant. There is a thin line of continuity between that assignment and her current one but this is a family newspaper, so I'm going to let it go.

One thing Haygood has going for her that the last four directors lacked is the support of Mayor Brown. "I think the department has already improved," he told the Chronicle last month. And indeed, apart from Prop. A, things went the way they were supposed to March 5. The outcome of all but one race and all propositions was known by 11:30 p.m. It is a far cry from previous elections, when races would still be undecided days and even weeks after the polls closed. The new ballot cards, introduced three years ago, replaced the now-discredited punch card method. The ballots are now scanned electronically and the processing time has been cut appreciably.

The trouble for Haygood is the company that put in the new system, Election Systems & Software, doesn't even have a prototype for conducting an instant runoff ready and doubts it could be implemented in time for the November election, even if it did. A mockup of a ballot ran in the Chronicle the day after the election, put together by the Chronicle design staff. The whole thing, especially Prop. A, is literally a pipe dream. ■

## How the TL 7 fared

The Tenderloin 7 who ran for county central committee weren't exactly the Magnificent Seven, but they did have to face formidable opponents.

NOMPC's Garrett Jenkins, who garnered 9,110 votes, came closest to winning. He placed 15th — only the first dozen got to join the Dist. 13 Democratic Central Committee.

Sue Bierman (#1) is a former supervisor; Wade Crowfoot (#2) and Bill Barnes (#8) are supes' aides. Debra Walker (#4) is president of the Harvey Milk Democratic Club; Criss Romero (#7) is past president of the Milk Club and Robert Haaland (#9) is Milk Club VP.

Richard Ow, who slipped in at #12 with 10,102 votes, is a member of the Alliance for a Better District 6, though he lives in District 3.

Following are the candidates and results. Combined they polled an impressive 22,280 votes.

— Geoff Link

### MEMBER, COUNTY COUNCIL, GREEN PARTY (WITH 659 OF 659 PRECINCTS COUNTED)

MARK STOUT	1,933	9.73
JANET NUDELMAN	1,925	9.69
DAVID SNYDER	1,888	9.50
LARISA CASILLAS	1,760	8.86
JUNE BRASHARES	1,500	7.55
SUSAN C. KING	1,450	7.30
CALEB KLEPPNER	1,424	7.17
SETH E. WATKINS	1,159	5.83
NANCY MARMOL	1,093	5.50
DON EICHELBERGER	933	4.70
JOHN-MARC CHANDONIA	857	4.31
JERRY THREET	844	4.25
ROBERT ARNOW	822	4.14
HARRY DRIGGS	804	4.05
<b>PAUL PLATT</b>	429	2.16
WRITE-IN	409	2.06
<b>MARC SALOMON</b>	389	1.96
MATT SPENCER	245	1.23

### DEMOCRATIC CENTRAL COMMITTEE DIST. 13 (WITH 376 OF 376 PRECINCTS COUNTED)

SUSAN J. BIERMAN	18,905	5.38
WADE CROWFOOT	17,577	5.00
LESLIE R. KATZ	17,324	4.93
DEBRA WALKER	15,543	4.42
TRACY BAXTER	13,567	3.86
JEFF SHEEHY	12,822	3.65
CRISS ROMERO	11,674	3.32
BILL BARNES	11,304	3.22
ROBERT HAALAND	11,139	3.17
JOE JULIAN	10,597	3.02
HOLLI THIER	10,563	3.01
RICHARD OW	10,102	2.87
DEAN GOODWIN	9,662	2.75
REBECCA DELGADO-ROTTMAN	9,472	2.70
<b>GARRETT JENKINS</b>	9,110	2.59
GREG SHAW	9,083	2.58
TOYE MOSES	8,959	2.55
SHARON P. JOHNSON	8,888	2.53
ESTHER LEE	8,547	2.43
JULIE D. SOO	7,954	2.26
THERESA SPARKS	7,552	2.15
A. TONI YOUNG	7,122	2.03
MIGUEL MARTINEZ BUSTOS	7,028	2.00
SHAWN O'HEARN	6,024	1.71
DAVID HOCHSCHILD	5,773	1.64
HUNTER STERN	5,768	1.64
GREG CHEW	5,596	1.59
ABRA CASTLE	5,492	1.56
DAVE MONKS	5,295	1.51
CYNTHIA A. ARNOLD	5,254	1.50
WILMA PANG	4,935	1.40
JIM MATHIAS	4,880	1.39
BILL SHEN	4,755	1.35
SETH STEWARD	4,519	1.29
DONA CROWDER	4,069	1.16
<b>HOUSTON ZHENG</b>	3,840	1.09
ALFONSO FILLON	3,824	1.09
PAUL McCONNELL	3,635	1.03
<b>RICHARD ALLMAN</b>	3,599	1.02
PAT FITZGERALD	3,561	1.01
<b>FREDERICK HOBSON</b>	3,546	1.01
LUIGI BARASSI	3,174	.90
PABLO HEISING	3,128	.89
JAMES "JIMMER" CASSIOL	2,960	.84
WRITE-IN	1,899	.54
<b>GILBERT F. CRISWELL</b>	1,367	.39

## Hastings hears it from the community

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ments: "Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you've got 'till it's gone. They paved paradise, and put up a parking lot" (from Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi"). His musical interlude complete, Robertson said, "This project lacks vision. This is a good fight."

The last word came from a Ms. Mayan, 12-year TL resident: "I'm a militant pedestrian, lived all my life without a car," she said. "You know, you CAN be a person without a car. We're sacrificing our first-born to the internal combustion machine."

Most memorable comment of the day?

"Congratulations," said Paul Hogarth, TL Housing Clinic staffer. "You've brought us all together. [People in the neighborhood] disagree all the time, but we all agree this plan is a disgrace."

Seward closed the meeting with the information that the final EIR will be published on April 12 and will incorporate the issues raised at this hearing.

Reached later, Seward told *The Extra* that he wasn't surprised by the degree of opposition to the garage.

"I've worked in the neighborhood since '82," he said, "and I've read all the materials from the past about Hastings and the community. This looks less volatile than it did when the college owned the whole

block — plans to level the block really got people's juices flowing."

Seward said he likes the idea of putting in a ground-floor supermarket, which several speakers supported, and that he's already contacted Rainbow Grocery to see if it's interested.

And the housing? "Any housing we'd put in would be student housing," Seward said. "But you know, that would benefit all the housing needs in the neighborhood," since the students wouldn't be taking away units from other residents.

Once published, the EIR will go to the Hastings board of directors at a public hearing on April 23, time and place TBA. ■



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