

Voters say no to 'mega-campus'

Challengers overwhelm incumbents to win seats on Pottstown School Board

By Evan Brandt
ebrandt@pottsmmerc.com

POTTSTOWN — Voters swept from office Tuesday the incumbent school board team that had advocated closing the borough's five elementary schools.

Instead, voters chose by a roughly 4-to-1 margin the team that championed saving those schools.

Unofficial results tabulated at Republican campaign headquarters showed a whopping 78 percent of the voters favoring the challengers — Dennis Wausnock, Julie Wilson, Michele Pargeon, Rick Huss and Nat White.

They handily defeated the team of one-term incumbents led by Barry Robertson, James Smock, Philip Thees, Bonita Barnhill and Cathy Skitko.

Both teams "cross-filed" for both the Republican and the Democratic line on the November ballot.

The challengers' overwhelming majority on both ballot lines makes the November election a foregone conclusion.

"I got fired, I understand that," Robertson said from his home after the results had become obvious.

"Of all the elections I've been in, this is the most exciting," said Huss, a former school board member who "came out of retirement because the issue meant so much to me" to run for a fourth time.

"It was exciting because the people spoke," Huss said.

What they spoke about was the rejection of the
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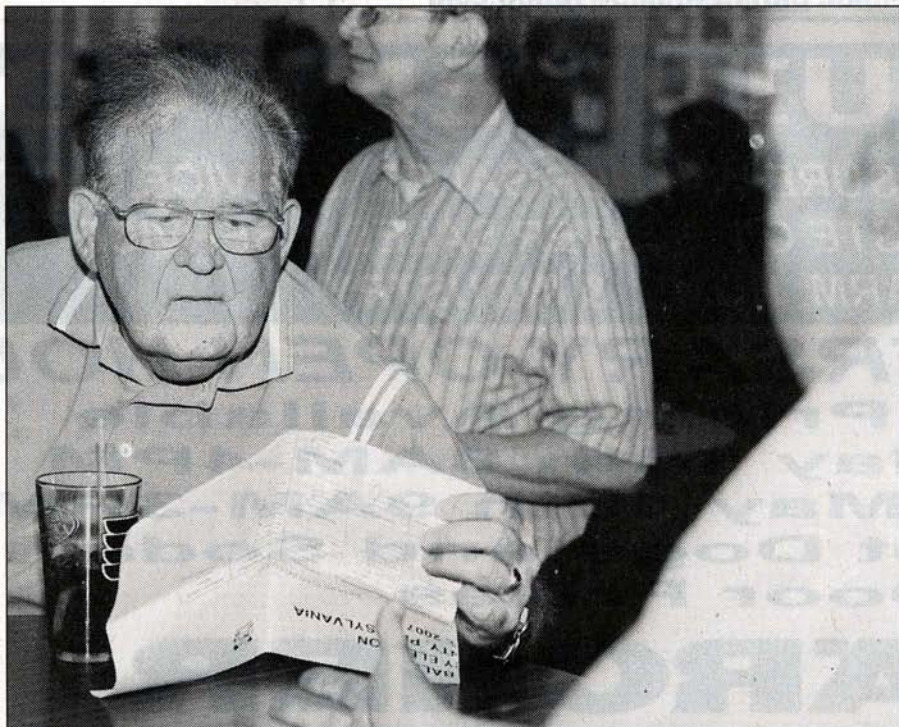
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Pottstown School Board challenger Michele Pargeon, above, greets voters in front of a sign telling voters to stop the \$54 million proposed mega campus in Pottstown. At right, the five challengers celebrate their victory. From left are Richard Huss, Julia Wilson, Nat White, Dennis Wausnock and Michele Pargeon smile and talk about the favorable results as they come in.



Daniel P. Creighton/The Mercury

The challengers for Pottstown School Board seats swept the race, going 5 for 5. At the Pour House, results were studied and counted as candidates waited for a tally. Above, Mary Ann Dailey and Joe Schlegel, foreground, were among those looking over results. At right, candidate Dennis Wausnock checks out the vote totals.



Photos by Daniel P. Creighton/The Mercury

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single elementary campus proposed for the Washington Street neighborhood, said Pargeon.

"I went door-to-door to 400 or 500 houses and I only found three people in favor of the 'mega-campus,'" Pargeon said.

Wilson credited hard work and the fact that "a lot of prayer went into this. I have to give God credit for the victory he gave Pottstown."

White said his team won because of

"a well-organized campaign, the sample ballots were very powerful and I think we touched on what Pottstown really wanted."

Added White, "Anyone with common sense could see that the 'mega-campus' was a boondoggle."

Wausnock, whom unofficial results showed to be the top vote-getter, said "We gave the people what they wanted to hear."

According to the unofficial results tabulated by Republican election work-

ers and fed, laboriously, into the lap top on which Borough Councilman Greg Berry tabulates the numbers, the outcome was overwhelming.

Wausnock, the top vote-getter, received 2,085; Wilson won 1,968; White earned 1,940; Huss collected 1,925 and Pargeon garnered 1,897 votes.

Those same unofficial results calculated a mere 483 votes for Thees; 470 for Skitko; 443 for Robertson; 409 for Barnhill and 398 for Smock.