

Some school boards to change after Tuesday election, \$500M bond approved

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The Somers Point school board is bound to look very different come January as five new candidates will likely take the oath of office.

Although the results have not been released, the five vacant seats open on the Board of Education will be filled exclusively with write-in candidates as no one filed to run in the general election.

Last month, five women launched a write-in campaign to take those seats.

“We would like to thank our community for coming out to vote,” said write-in candidate Heather Samuelson. “While we wait for the votes to be tallied and certified, it is our hope that no matter who wins, our schools continue to make positive growth.”

Samuelson’s write-in running mates were Sarah Platt, Courtney Laut, Darwisa Strabuk and Jenna DeCicco. As of Tuesday night, after all of the day-of votes were cast, there were 755 write-in votes for the three open seats on the school board and 530 write-in votes for the two unexpired seats.

While the New Jersey School Boards Association reported this week that the rate of candidacy is up slightly statewide for boards of education, locally there were still few contested races and Somers Point was not the only town to lack candidates for open seats.

However, there were some highly contested races, like Egg Harbor Township, which had three candidates for every seat. In an upset, voters cast out incumbent Jack Haines from the local school board and voted back in Barbara Szilagyi, who lost her seat last year.

Board President Pete Castellano will keep his seat, and newcomer Kristy Bird was also voted in, unofficial results show.

In addition, the seat vacated this summer by Michelle CarneyRay-Yoder when she took a new job as superintendent in Somers Point was too close to call, although unofficial results had Michael Price up by 131 votes with 362 write-in ballots.

Atlantic City, Vineland and Millville all had several candidates run for their three open seats each.

In Vineland, Board President Jeffrey Bordley was defeated, unofficial results show, while Inez Acosta and Chris Jennings retained their seats. Former board member Scott English was the second-highest vote-getter after Acosta and will return to the school board.

There were 1,566 open school board seats statewide. According to the NJSBA, 529 New Jersey school districts had November elections, including every district in The Press coverage area.

Locally, there were no ballot proposals related to the school districts.

The statewide ballot question asked voters to decide to bond \$500 million for county vocational schools, school water infrastructure projects and county college projects. According to The Associated Press, the referendum passed at 52 percent of votes in favor. Locally, however, voters turned down the referendum.

Atlantic County, reporting 94 percent, voted against the \$500 million bond referendum 34,493 to 27,764. Cape May County, reporting all districts, voted against 16,242 to 14,237. In Cumberland County, reporting 100 percent, the referendum failed 15,435 to 14,693. Ocean County, with all districts reporting, was strongly against the referendum at 96,040 to 54,663.