

The city scene . . .

Vote shows strong city administration favor

Nov. 8 1979

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register
political editor

Results in Tuesday's municipal elections indicate, as has generally been the case, strong support for the current city administration.

The five repeatedly predicted as the favorites finished at the top, but the placements were a mild surprise. However, it has always been the case that some candidates run stronger than expected, while others don't meet expectations.

All five of the top finishers, Sam K. Sakaguchi, Wesley W. Deist and Art Chandler, who won the three posts, and Roy C. Barnes and Marion Orme, heartily endorsed city administration policies.

These five were well ahead of the pack, followed then by William Hatch, and then the two most outspoken opponents of the city administration, Milton F. Adam and Joe Plum.

Finishing far back were Alberta Pasta, Peter Schuelke, David Archuleta, Donald Duwayne Patterson and Wendell Camp.

Mayor Thomas Campbell had expressed pleasure with any of the five winning the top seats.

If there are any surprises it was the tremendous showing of Sakaguchi, the appointed incumbent of two years ago, who actually didn't campaign as hard as the four other leaders. That influenced many to believe that he might have difficulty making the winner's circle.

As it developed, the mild-speaking Sakaguchi attracted widespread backing from most of the city as the lone incumbent.

Chandler, who most believed might lead the ticket, landed in third place, nosed out by Diest by five votes. These two likely waged the most intensive campaign of the 14, and their efforts were reflected in the results.

Sakaguchi amassed 4,244 votes, followed by Deist 2,878 and Chandler 2,873. Deist and Chandler will replace Jim R. Freeman and Charles Clark, who did not seek re-election.

The other two favorites, Barnes with 2,602 and Orme with 2,262 finished strong, and out of the money, but did not match the intensive house-to-house solicitation of Chandler and Deist.



MAYOR THOMAS CAMPBELL wasn't actually a candidate in Tuesday's municipal elections in Idaho Falls, but the five who warmly backed his administration finished at the top and those who led the opposition landed well behind.

Hatch finished well, with 1,635 votes mostly as result of a highly respected family name. He also lacked the strenuous foot-slogging campaign conducted by most of the leaders.

Adam, with 1,502 votes, and Plum, with 1,280 finished in the middle of the pack and well out of the running. They courageously led the opposition, but it didn't get far in face of general satisfaction by the public with the way the administration is conducting its affairs.

Pasta, with 953 votes, had been looked on as a dark horse and a possible threat, because of hard campaigning, but his lack of name identity with the leaders proved too much to overcome.

Trailing were Frandsen, with 749; Schuelke, 373; Archuleta, 356; Patterson, 281; and Camp, 261. All campaigned lightly and lacked previous public exposure.

The vote of 7,861 or 39.7 percent of the 19,800 registered, fell below the predictions of close to 10,000, and well below the record 11,218 of two years ago. The election this year lacked a mayoral contest, but observers had believed this would be partially offset by the record field of 14 and the vigorous campaigning conducted by most of

the leaders.

Sakaguchi's vote is all the more remarkable because it showed that 4,244 of the 7,861 who went to the polls, or 54 percent, voted for him. It now affirms that he is a strong councilman in his own right.

Sakaguchi won 20 precincts, Chandler three, and Deist one. Plum, with 204, and Adam, with 202, topped the Edgemont Garden precinct. This is where the Jennie Lee residents vote, many of whom had opposed the administration's approval of the nearby Jennie Lee Mall. However, the opposition was not that pronounced, as Sakaguchi, with 188, and Deist, with 187, were not far behind.

Going back over the records, the people of Idaho Falls have generally approved the way the city administration has conducted its affairs in recent years.

This was true for the 12 years of Mayor S. Eddie Pedersen's administration, the Campbell reign of the past two years, and Mayor William O'Bryant's four years.

The only deviation was in 1961 and 1963, when two incumbent councilmen, Alex Creek and Phil Leahy, were beaten, and a third incumbent, Donald Foote did not seek re-election.

They were faulted for approving without advance notice, the purchase of the old Smith-Hart building, which now houses the public works and planning and inspection service departments, and the Sand Creek Park.

Actually it was one of the smartest purchases the city ever made, because those properties are probably now worth 10 times what the city paid.

Such is politics.