

PANIL Notes

Volume 35 Piedmont Avenue Neighborhood Improvement League - PO Box 20375, Oakland 94620 Sept/Oct 2010

Ranked Choice Voting Revealed

By William Manley

With the November election, ranked choice voting comes to Alameda County. Unsure who you want for mayor? No problem: you get to vote for three people!

At the August 11 PANIL meeting, Dave Macdonald, Registrar of Voters for Alameda County was on hand to explain it all. With the aid of a slick PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Macdonald walked through choosing a candidate for mayor. Instead of selecting THE person you want, you can select first, second and third choices. Alameda County has opted for this maximum of three. Of course, if only a single candidate appeals to you, you don't have to mark 2nd and 3rd choices. As you can imagine, this has increased the size of the ballot.

Ranked choice voting, or RCV, is also referred to as "Instant Runoff Voting" in that it eliminates the need for a runoff election. If no candidate gets a majority of first choice votes, the candidate who received the fewest votes for the office is eliminated, and the second choice of those ballots of the eliminated candidate are then added to the totals of the remaining candidates.

To illustrate, using the candidates shown in this sample:

•If Rivera gets 4 first choice votes, Washington gets 3 and Miller gets 2, Miller is eliminated because he received the fewest first choice votes.

•The tabulators then look at the second choices on 2 ballots that had Miller as their first choice. If one of those ballots had Rivera as the second choice and the other had Washington, both remaining candidates would get one more vote.

Rivera would then have 5 and win the election since he would then have the majority of the 9 votes cast.

Of course with a larger field of candidates (like with 10 candidates in the Oakland Mayor's race) this process could take a few iterations. Fortunately we have computers.

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NONPARTISAN	NONPARTISAN	NONPARTISAN
CITY	CITY	CITY
FOR MAYOR	FOR MAYOR	FOR MAYOR
1 FIRST CHOICE Vote for One	2 SECOND CHOICE <i>(This must be different from your first choice.)</i> Vote for One	3 THIRD CHOICE <i>(This must be different from your first and second choices.)</i> Vote for One
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT	ELEANOR ROOSEVELT	ELEANOR ROOSEVELT
BOOKER T. WASHINGTON	BOOKER T. WASHINGTON	BOOKER T. WASHINGTON
DIEGO RIVERA	DIEGO RIVERA	DIEGO RIVERA
ARTHUR MILLER	ARTHUR MILLER	ARTHUR MILLER

PANIL Monthly Meetings: Second Wednesday 7:30 p.m.

Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council — 7:30 pm

Sandra Sanders-West, Neighborhood Service Coordinator

General Meeting — 8:00 pm

September 8 Safeway's Revised Design for Rockridge Center

Safeway Representatives; Stuart Flashman, Environmental Attorney

October 13 General Meeting: Propositions on the November Ballot

Piedmont Gardens, 110 41st Street — 11th Floor Sky Room

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Ranked Choice Voting Revealed continued from pg 1

As complex and as time-consuming as this may sound, the big plus of RCV is that it saves the very costly expense of run-off elections. It should also save candidates a great deal of money. As we all know, Meg Whitman spent \$80 million just to get on the Fall gubernatorial ballot. For less well-endowed candidates, the costs of running two campaigns can be prohibitive.

Another strong argument in favor of RCV is that it gives voters an opportunity to vote for whom they really want – even when pundits say the candidate has no chance to win – and not feel that theirs is a throw-away vote. If their candidate is eliminated, they know that their second choice will get the vote.

Berkeley and San Leandro will join Oakland as other Alameda County cities using RCV for the first time.

Oakland elects its Mayor, City Council members, City Attorney, City Auditor, and School Directors using Ranked-Choice Voting. San Francisco, and many other cities throughout the US and countries around the world use variations of this. Statewide and national elections in the US have not yet adopted it.

The audience threw many questions at the registrar, such as

- *Why is there not just first and second choice, or for that matter, more than three?*
- *Shouldn't 2nd and 3rd choices be discounted in value?*
- *What if I choose the same candidate for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices?*

Mr. Macdonald said that Alameda County modeled its system on that of San Francisco, which appears to be simple and successful. While one can make an argument for discounting, no one has a generally-accepted idea of what that discount would be. The counting algorithm does not allow for a single ballot to be worth any more than a single vote, so repeating your candidate twice still only gives him/her one vote.

With the crowded mayoral field this November, the system will get a good test. If this explanation wasn't clear enough for you, or you'd just like to learn more about the process, go to the RCV page of the Registrar, <http://www.acgov.org/rov/rcv/>, where you can get information explained, download brochures, and get news of other public meetings. The Registrar is also doing TV spots on the new process, so come this next election, the candidates may confound you, but the ballot should not.

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School Board Director **Jody London**
Invites you to a District 1
TOWN HALL MEETING
Featuring
Superintendent Tony Smith, Ph.D.
Tuesday, September 28, 2010
7 – 8:30 p.m.
Piedmont Avenue Elementary School
4314 Piedmont Avenue
Oakland, California

- Learn about Oakland's strategic plan to become a full service community school district
- Provide your ideas
- Compare notes with other public school supporters

== Refreshments provided ==

For more information and to RSVP:

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Results of PANIL Steering Committee Election

PANIL's Steering Committee, with input from neighbors, decides on the positions PANIL will take on issues before the Oakland Planning Commission and City Council. The Steering Committee organizes PANIL's monthly meetings. Steering Committee members advocate for PANIL policy through letters or appearances at public hearings. provides a voice for neighbors in civic and community affairs, including development and zoning, parks, and public safety concerns. PANIL helps neighbors advocate effectively with city government.

PANIL by-laws provide that new members are nominated by the Steering Committee for one year terms. Nominees were profiled in the July issue of PANIL Notes and ballots were mailed to all current PANIL members.

Those reelected were **Margitta Gardner, Bill Manley, Valerie Winemiller and Kelsey Krausen.** **Christine Abrams** was elected to a first term.

Thanks to them for their service.

**Community Meeting about
Piedmont Avenue Branch Library
Piedmont Gardens
11th Floor Sky Room
Wednesday, September 15, 7:00 p.m.**

The Friends of the Piedmont Avenue Branch Library and Oakland Public Library Administration have investigated several of the options mentioned in the recent survey of public opinion about the future of the branch and will present and discuss the options. To review the options, see the July 2010 issue of PANIL Notes on the PANIL website: www.PANIL.org.