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Did signs, spending determine election outcome?

BY DAN EAKIN, Staff Writer

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The Lewisville City Council election is over. Incumbents Greg Tierney and Lathan Watts won handily.

But several questions linger:

Was the fact that Tierney and Watts put out more signs than their opponents, John Gorena and David Fogle, a major factor in the outcome? And was the fact that Tierney and Watts outspent their opponents by more than 3-1 a major factor?

Or would Tierney and Watts been re-elected even if they had put out the same number of signs as their opponents, and even if they had spent only the same amount on their campaigns as their opponents?

Were Tierney and Watts re-elected primarily because of their previous experience on the council and because they possibly have more friends and acquaintances in Lewisville than their opponents?

Next question:

Is it possible that Tierney and Watts would have gotten even more votes had they not chosen to change the aesthetics of a portions of the city by blanketing them with their signs?

For several weeks before the election Saturday, the greenery around Lewisville City Hall and on the west side of the Municipal Annex looked like political gardens, with beds of Tierney and Watts signs, and a few Gorena and Fogle signs.

As for expenses, both Gorena and Fogle got more votes for their money than Tierney or Watts.

Gorena spent less than \$1,200, according to campaign reports he has filed with City Secretary Julie Heinze. He got 506 votes, so he spent about \$2.37 per vote. Tierney told the Leader Tuesday that his campaign costs will total about \$5,427. He got 796 votes, so his cost for the campaign would amount to \$6.82 per vote.

Fogle spent a total of \$694, all on signs or nails and stakes for signs, through May 1. Watts reported spending \$3,678.64 between March 31 and May 2. Fogle got 461 votes, so each vote cost him about \$1.50 if expenses are equated to votes. Watts got 811 votes, so he spent more than \$4.50 per vote, based on what he reported by May 2.

Candidates are to submit a final campaign expense report by July 15. Gorena and Fogle said they have already reported nearly all of their expenses. Watts said he has not yet totaled the amount spent after May 2. Tierney said he will file an expense report with the city after all of the bills are paid, totaling the \$5,427 mentioned above, probably next week. He said his goal was for campaign expenses to be close to the amount of contributions received.

Neither Tierney nor Watts have reportedly spent all of their campaign contributions, at least not yet. Tierney reported a total of \$5,950 in campaign contributions, and Watts reported \$5,130. Gorena reported \$784.46 in political contributions and Fogle reported \$50 in contributions.

One final question: If significantly more than 1,398 of the city's 45,142 registered voters n 3.10 percent -- had cast ballots, would the outcome have been the same?

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