

Money measures win in Atherton, E. Palo Alto

By Don West
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ATHERTON — Money measures here and in East Palo Alto have won support of a substantial majority of the voters, but in Redwood City seven non-money issues won, while one that might have saved tax dollars failed.

Atherton's approval of a four-year extension on a special municipal tax, a reversal of a defeat just five months ago, highlighted San Mateo County's municipal elections yesterday.

Some 70.4 percent of Atherton's voters approved the tax, which will cost the average homeowner in this affluent community \$388 the first year and increase to \$485 the fourth year.

The money battle in East Palo Alto was over rent control approved last November by the City Council. Some 57.3 percent cast ballots in favor of keeping controls on large rental properties in the young city.

In Redwood City, the only charter amendment to fail was Proposition G, which asked permission to eliminate

the full publication of proposed changes in city ordinances. Some 57.8 percent voted against the suggestion.

Nearly all the other Charter amendments were technical in nature, including Proposition A, which will set up a system for eliminating sexist references in the city's ordinances.

A disappointingly small turnout at the polls plagued officials in all three communities, with Redwood City's 17 percent turnout the lowest.

But even in Atherton, where a major campaign drive with precinct workers, postcard mailouts and home education efforts were made, only 49 percent participated.

In East Palo Alto, where only 28 percent cast ballots, Mayor Barbara Mouton said she was heartened by the results nonetheless.

"Our people have spoken and their message is that East Palo Alto is not for sale," Mouton said.

The mayor estimated that anti-rent-control forces had spent nearly \$9 for every vote that was cast against rent control.

Jack Orr, consultant for the anti-rent control group, said his people encountered difficulty in getting voters to the polls.

Orr said his group planned to continue pushing for another measure, one called the Private Property Rights Initiative, part of a statewide effort to remove the City Council's powers over rental and other marketing decisions.

The group's initiative petition is currently being checked by the city clerk before the council makes a decision about placing it on the ballot, Mouton said.

The Atherton tax measure decision was hailed by town councilwoman Nan Chapman as only the first step for town officials.

"We know the voters will hold us accountable for what we do with this money and we hope we will not have to come back again in another four years," she said.

She credited the tax measure's success to broad community organization that had worked on several levels to reach all the residents of the affluent town.

"We believed that we failed last year because we did not get the message out, and if we could reach all of the town's voters, we could convince them," said Chapman.

Last November, a similar measure fell short of the required two-thirds majority by five percentage points; this time, it won by about five points.

An organized opposition had campaigned vigorously to kill the special tax, which the Town Council members said was needed to prevent drastic cutbacks in town services.