

Election officials poised for big turnout

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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Port poll workers expect long lines Tuesday despite steady stream of City Hall visitors for early voting

Port Washington officials are gearing up for a busy election day Tuesday, despite the fact more voters than usual are casting their ballots early.

“I guess people are afraid of long lines on election day,” City Clerk Mark Grams said when asked why so many residents are voting early.

With so many people voting early and registering ahead of time, the lines may not be too bad, he said.

“There are always lines first thing in the morning and about 4:30 p.m., but the rest of the day it’s just pretty steady,” Grams said.

Since early voting began Oct. 22, there has seldom been a time when there hasn’t been someone casting a ballot at City Hall, Deputy City Clerk Susan Westerbeke said.

“We’ve had lines on and off,” she said.



On Oct. 22 alone, 172 people came to City Hall to vote, Westerbeke said, and since then, more than 100 people a day have voted daily.

By Tuesday, 1,275 people had received absentee ballots or voted early, she said.

“If it gets as busy as I expect in the next couple days, we may hit 2,000 (early voters),” Westerbeke said, noting the city has about 8,000 registered voters.

During the last presidential election, she said, between 1,600 and 1,700 absentee ballots were cast in the city.

A number of people have also stopped at City Hall to register during the last week, she said.

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“More (people are registering) than I anticipated after the recall election,” Westerbeke said, adding many are residents who have moved within the city.

In the Town of Port Washington, Clerk Jenny Schlenvogt is holding extra office hours to accommodate early voters and people who need to register.

In addition to her regular hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays, Town Hall will be open from 5 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 1, and 2 to 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 2.

Polls open throughout the county at 7 a.m. and close at 8 p.m.

At the top of the ballot will be the presidential election.

While most people are expected to vote for Democratic President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden or their Republican challengers, Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan, there are other candidates.

They include Constitution candidates Virgil Goode and Jim Clymer, Libertarians Gary Johnson and James Gray, Green Party candidates Jill Stein and Ben Manski, Socialist Equality Party candidates Jerry White and Phyllis Scherrer and Party of Socialism and Liberation candidates Gloria La Riva and Filberto Famirez, Jr.

Also expected to bring people out are the U.S. Senate race between Republican Tommy Thompson and Democrat Tammy Baldwin, and the race between Republican Tom Petri and Democrat Joe Kallas for the 6th Congressional District seat.

Highly contested races between incumbent Glenn Grothman, a Republican, and challenger Tanya Lohr, a Democrat, for the 20th District State Senate seat and, in the south end of the county, between incumbent Jim Ott, a Republican, and Democratic challenger Cris Rogers for the 23rd District Assembly seat are also expected to draw voters to the polls.

A smattering of uncontested races — among them Adam Gerol for district attorney, Julie Winkelhorst for county clerk, Karen Makoutz for county treasurer and Ronald Voigt for register of deeds — will also be on the ballot.

Grams predicted that voting on Tuesday, Nov. 6, will be brisk, anticipating a turnout in the city of 60% to 70% — fewer than the gubernatorial recall election and about the same as the last presidential election, he said.

“The recall election was the highest turnout we’ve had,” Grams said. “I think that’s because it was more of a personal race. People took that one really personally.”

The presidential election always brings out a lot of people, he said.

“This one has been as dirty and nasty as it gets,” Grams said. “I’m sure it’s turned some people off, but I don’t think it’ll stop people from voting.”

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