

Snyder, Carpenter election winners

By Jeanne Davant

Mayor-elect Marc Snyder said Wednesday that his top priority for 2010 will be finding sustainable sources of revenue for the city.

"Our goal is not just to balance the budget, but to determine what level of funding we need to keep the level of services our citizens deserve and expect, our city fully funded and staffed. That's the number I'm trying to get to," Snyder said.

Snyder, who currently serves as mayor pro tem, defeated opponents Rick Barry and Nancy Sage Barnes. Snyder won almost 50 percent of the vote, outpolling Barry by 65 votes in a tight race.

"It was a hard-fought race," Snyder said. "He ran a heck of a campaign."

Snyder said he had tried to run a grass-roots campaign and was very grateful and thankful "to all the people who helped out, walking neighborhoods, making signs and making financial contributions. I'm just humbled by the whole experience."

Snyder said he is pleased that Ballot Issue 2D passed strongly. The measure removes restraints on the Capital Improvements Fund and will allow Council more flexibility to use tax revenues.

"That will help us, but it's short term," he said. "Right now, we're thinking of short-term funding options to get us through until we can get more sustainable funding. We're going to have a pretty tough budget season. We know we're going to have to make some big cuts.... Everything's on the table to increase revenues and cut costs. I want to look at across-the-board measures and look line item by line item to cobble together a balanced budget and begin to find long-term solutions."

Snyder noted that the failure of Ballot Measure 2C in Colorado Springs will have effects beyond that city's borders.

"It's going to be devastating to kids and adults who play sports over there," he said. Proponents of 2C, which sought a property tax increase, have said that the Colorado Springs Parks and Recreation Department likely would be the target of major budget cuts if the measure didn't pass.

"We may be getting some minor benefits," Snyder said, "for example, increased use of the pool. One of the things we might have to address is our nonresident fee."

Another priority for Snyder will be "restoring a healthy balance between the needs of residents and the needs of the business community. My most fervent hope is to heal that rift. I think we need to value those things equally in the policy and budget decisions we make. It takes both to make a healthy, vibrant community; when we get in trouble is when we get-out-of-balance. We really need to recognize all interests and bring all the stakeholders together."

Race for Mayor

Total votes - 1,525

Nancy Sage Barnes

76 votes - 4.98 percent

Rick Barry

692 votes - 45.38 percent

Marc A. Snyder

757 votes - 49.64 percent

Ward 3 race

Total votes - 481

Matt Carpenter

335 votes - 69.65 percent

Karen Cullen

146 votes - 30.35 percent

Matt Carpenter, who defeated opponent Karen Cullen for the Ward 3 Council seat, is expected to begin his term a bit earlier than Michael Gerbig, Jr., and Ingrid Richter, who were unopposed in Wards 1 and 2, respectively.

Gerbig and Richter will take their seats Jan. 5, after the current terms of Donna Ford in Ward 1 and Tony Jones in Ward 2 expire at the end of this year. The Ward 3 seat has been vacant since the resignation of Shannon Solomon in July.

It is expected Carpenter will be appointed to the vacant seat next Tuesday, bringing Council back to its full seven-member strength.

Carpenter said his top priority will be to improve communications.

"I want to get the minutes (of Council meetings) online, which they haven't been since 2003," he said Wednesday.

Carpenter said he will have to hit the ground running as Council plunges into the 2010 budget next week.

"Beyond the budget, I'm really excited about the single-hauler trash system we're looking into," he said. He noted that Ten Christman had done the heavy lifting in getting that proposal off the ground. "The bottom line is it's the citizens who actually do things. We just make decisions on their hard work."

Carpenter hopes to encourage more citizen involvement by increasing opportunities for citizens to comment on agenda items during meetings and improving communications.

"We need to make sure there's trust between Council and the citizens," he said. "We don't want to turn this into a suicidal town like the one next door. Here, our citizens do pull together."

Councilwoman Aimee Cox seconded that sentiment, saying she was thrilled that Ballot Measure 2D passed with a resounding majority.

"I think that indicates that Manitou residents do trust their elected officials," said Cox, who authored the measure along with Deputy Finance Director Becca Davis. "I think this charter amendment will absolutely benefit the budget this year and help us through some real difficult times. We do have many capital needs in our town, and we have to budget for those, but right now, it gives us the flexibility we need to balance the budget."

Cox said she hopes that flexibility will allow the city to hire a full-time city administrator and a code enforcement officer in 2010.

"I think a city administrator will be able to create some efficiencies," she said, such as savings on legal fees, identifying new revenue sources and finding cost-effective ways to do business, as well as providing leadership.

Cox and Snyder said they were pleased with the experience and diversity the new Council will bring to their mission.

"Manitou has always been a voice for progressive leadership and ideas in the region," Cox said. "I think in next couple of years we really need to step out and let the region know what we do and why what we do works, and be the progressive voice in El Paso County."

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