

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Potter elected mayor by 2 to 1 margin; Baron and Theis for council



PHOTOS/KERRY BELSER



[Clockwise, from above] At the Cypress Inn Tuesday night, Mayor-elect Dave Potter and wife Janine Chicourat celebrated his landslide win over Steve Dallas, while councilwoman Carrie Theis talked about her reelection to another four-year term, and council challenger Jeff Baron shared the news of his victory. They'll all be sworn in early next month after the election results are certified.

### ■ Landslide called 'shocking' by all sides

By MARY SCHLEY

DESPITE AGGRESSIVE campaigning by Mayor Steve Dallas and his fellow incumbents, Carmel voters resoundingly chose Dave Potter as their new mayor and Jeff Baron as their new councilman Tuesday. The surprising result — Potter received almost 60 percent of the vote, and Dallas just 30 percent — practically shouted the electorate's desire for change in city hall. The only incumbent to survive was Carrie Theis, who earned another four years on the council.

Councilman Bobby Richards, often the minority voice on the council and a strong supporter of Potter and Baron, said the election sent two messages: "The majority of voters in Carmel-by-the-Sea will not tolerate boorish, thoughtless and tasteless behavior, and they like a democracy with independent thinkers."

### No close calls

According to "semi-final" results posted by Monterey County Elections early Wednesday morning, 817 people voted for Potter, while Dallas got 402 votes and Gene Hughes received 156 votes. Of the city's 2,566 registered voters, 1,460 cast ballots, for turnout of just under 57 percent, the county elections office said.

In the council race, voters were asked to pick two candidates. Baron got a little more than 43 percent, with 866 votes, while Theis garnered 655 (just under 33 percent), and fellow incumbent Carolyn Hardy received 481 votes, or 24 percent.

Because ballots were no longer counted at city hall, several of the candidates on Tuesday skipped the traditional Election Night gathering in city hall, instead opting for dinner out with family and friends, or gathering with supporters at their own parties. Baron appeared briefly, while Theis greeted people there for a while before leaving for her own celebration.

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## VOTERS APPROVE CAL AM TAKEOVER MEASURE

By KELLY NIX

THE BALLOT measure that asked voters to approve a possible government takeover of California American Water landed an easy victory Tuesday, and the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District said its board would soon begin the process of putting together a team of consultants to determine the feasibility of buying the private utility.

On Nov. 6, voters OK'd the Public Water Now-sponsored Measure J by a vote of 15,353 (55 percent) to 12,616 (45 percent). The measure mandates a takeover of Cal Am if the water district determines it's feasible to do so, and said the study must be finished within nine months.

Public Water Now managing director George Riley called the outcome "a big day" for the Monterey Peninsula.

"Our water is the foundation of our community," Riley said in a press release. "It's far too important to be controlled by a private corporation for profit. Public Water Now's goal has always been local control and lower costs."

Riley was also victorious in landing a seat on the water district board, beating incumbent Andy Clarke.

Cal Am Central California Manager Catherine Stedman thanked those who supported the utility in its No on J campaign, which allocated nearly \$2 million to try to defeat the ballot measure.

"Our commitment to provide clean, safe affordable drinking water continues, as does our commitment to move forward with the Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project," Stedman told The Pine Cone, referring to the company's desalination plant in Marina.

### 'Top notch' team

Meanwhile, the water district held a press conference Wednesday to outline the steps it would undertake to launch the study to determine if acquiring Cal Am would be feasible.

"The district is going to embark on the study in a fair and balanced manner," said Clarke, who will soon be replaced on the water board by Riley.

Clarke explained that once the election results are certified in early December, the board can begin the process of finding consultants to undertake the study and assess the cost of acquiring Cal Am.

"We have a limited time frame to get this study done, so we are going to be looking at experts in the fields" of appraisal and ratemaking, Clarke said.

Water district general manager Dave Stoldt said the agency wants to rely on outside experts to perform the analysis so the public feels the process is "objective, fair and well thought-out."

Although the district hasn't decided how many members will make up the consulting team, Stoldt said it already has an idea of who might be a part of it.

"We have identified certain consultants in certain areas that we will reach out to," he explained about the group, which is

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## P.G. votes to limit STRs

### ■ Also raising hotel tax

By KELLY NIX

PACIFIC GROVE voters Tuesday approved a measure that bans vacation rentals in some Pacific Grove neighborhoods and phases out those existing rentals within 18 months.

County elections office results indicate that 3,047 votes (58 percent) were cast in favor of Measure M, compared to 2,186 votes (42 percent) against the measure. Measure M's approval means the city's municipal code will be amended to prohibit short-term rentals in neighborhoods outside the coastal zone and commercial areas.

Pacific Grove Chamber of Commerce President Moe Ammar said the outcome of the election makes it clear that residents "care about the character of the neighborhoods" and support local inkeepers.

"Pacific Grove will be in line with neighboring cities of Monterey and Carmel when dealing with short-term rentals," Ammar said. "Ninety percent of the funding to fight M came from outside of Pacific Grove. The No on M campaign could not buy the election."

Measure M's approval means a loss of about \$1.25 million in vacation rental tax for the city, revenue that goes toward funding a host of services and programs. In all, vacation rental tax amounted to \$2.2 million from July 2017 to June 30 of this year.

Short-term rental owner Alka Joshi said opponents of

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## 'Essential' Big Sur firm faces hurdles at new site

By CHRIS COUNTS

A COMPANY community leaders say Big Sur "would be lost without," Blaze Engineering has being forced to vacate its longtime headquarters across from the River Inn. But its plan to move to a site right next door has run into opposition from the California Coastal Commission — in part because the business doesn't directly benefit tourists.

The Monterey County Planning Commission will weigh in on the topic Nov. 14.

For three decades, Blaze Engineering has rented a redwood-shaded site next to Highway 1 for the base of its operations. Founded in 1986, the company offers a wide array of essential services, including paving and fixing roads, and

See **FIRM** page 23A

## P.B. Co. says, 'Howdy!'



PHOTO/KELLY NIX

In addition to its golf courses, resorts, beaches and the famous 17 Mile Drive, Pebble Beach will open a visitor centers at The Lodge next week. See page 7A.