

ews COVER STORY

Voters say yes to infrastructure, no to SRO

Referendum items voted for, against with big margins

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With elections for Village, District 35, Glencoe Public Library and Glencoe Park District boards all going uncontested, the referendum on the Tuesday, April 7 ballot relating to school safety and village infrastructure took center stage.

And in both instances, the result was a landslide.

With a 24.5 percent voter turnout (of 6,122 registered voters), Glencoe voters weighed in overwhelmingly in support of Proposition One, or \$7.5 million in capital improvements, and against the placement of a school resource officer (SRO) at Central School for the 2015-16 school year.

A third item, calling for a bond issuance of \$2.5 million to replace the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system at Village Hall – built in 1956 – also passed, but not quite as easily, with 67 percent voting in favor of the update to the building's HVAC system.

The referendum item asking whether voters wanted to place a privately funded SRO – who would be a Glencoe Public Safety officer – at Central School for a pilot program beginning with the 2015-16 school year was nearly as one-sided as the vote for Proposition One.

After a long and often contentious lead-up to the vote, 81.2 percent of voters came in against the referendum item – which was a nonbinding, advisory referendum – a total of 1,211 votes against to 280 in fa-

vor.

On what was a chilly Tuesday evening, voters trickled into the Central School polling location right up until a few minutes to 7 p.m., when polls officially closed, undeterred by the unseasonable weather. Some of them expressed their support for the placement of an officer at Central School for the 2015-16 pilot program.

“I think that [having a school resource officer] is a deterrent from somebody coming in and God forbid hurting any of the children,” Laney Pressman said.

Pressman added that the fact that the pilot program would be privately funded and that the SRO would also have EMT training were other aspects of the program that prompted her to vote yes.

“An armed policeman at the school is probably worthwhile today,” added Nola Krisik, who voted in favor of the SRO referendum item.

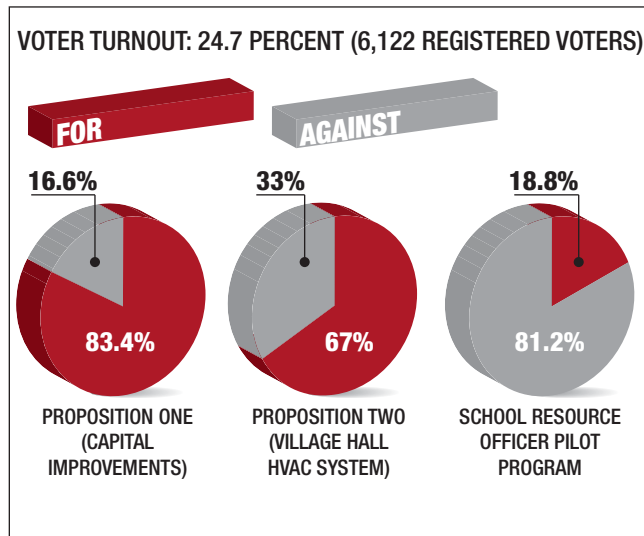
Voters on the other side of the issue, however, viewed the funding aspect differently.

“I just don't think that private money should be funding public decisions,” Carol Dawley said.

Some voters focused on the process behind the initiative.

“It wasn't driven by the schools or the Village or any other verifiable body that I could tell,” Renee Richart said. “Nor was it endorsed by them.”

Similarly, some voters said they trusted the decisions made by the District 35 Board of Education, which commissioned three independent audits in early 2013 to assess the three dis-



trict schools' overall safety and potential areas for improvement.

“I put my faith in the school board,” Matt Robbins said. “I think the school board made a good decision, and was very thorough in making their decisions and doing security audits. I yield to them.”

Yes Safe Schools Glencoe, the independent parent group which brought the referendum question to the ballot after acquiring the requisite signatures in January, released a statement following the release of the election results.

“Although the school safety referendum fell short of passing, Yes Safe Schools Glencoe is encouraged that many Glencoe residents strongly supported the initiative aimed at improving school safety and providing additional medical assistance for our children.

“Yes Safe Schools Glencoe is proud that the community engaged in open and robust dialogue regarding this important issue. We look forward to working with the administration, Village and the entire com-

munity in ensuring a nurturing, comfortable and safe learning environment for our children.”

Meanwhile, a referendum item calling for the issuance of \$7.5 million in bonds to pay for capital improvements throughout the village, namely relating to storm sewer, sanitary sewer, street resurfacing and sidewalk replacement, also yielded a convincing result, albeit in the affirmative direction.

After all precincts reported, 83.6 percent of voters supported the large-scale improvement projects.

For many residents, flooding has been an issue, causing some to voice their distress at Village Board meetings at the tail end of 2014, when representatives from Engineering Research Associates Inc., the firm contracted to execute a stormwater drainage study last July – in which five problem areas were identified – presented their findings to the board. Those problem areas were the Skokie Ridge, Madison Avenue, Greenwood Avenue and Terrace Court drainage

basins, in addition to the Hazel Avenue underpass southeast of Village Hall.

The Village commissioned the July study following flooding events in May and June of 2014, three years after an even more significant flooding event in the village took place in July 2011.

Robbins, who said he was one of the many people in the village affected by flooding, voted for the capital improvements bond issuance.

“I think it's just critical that we keep up to date,” Robbins said. “Many of us in this town have flooded, and anything we can do to make it better is good.”

Len Ferber, who voted in favor of both bond issuance items, said he isn't directly affected by the flooding issues some Glencoe residents have dealt with; nonetheless, he voted yes.

“I think [the village] needs it, especially the sewer [improvements],” Ferber said. “It's the right thing to do.”

Eileen O'Halloran, who does live in one of the five flooding problem areas identified in the study, the 55-acre Terrace Court watershed, expressed her support for the improvements, noting that her home experienced flooding last May during an event that affected her entire neighborhood.

“I voted yes to stop the flooding in Glencoe and to maintain our village infrastructure,” she said. “This [proposition] not only covers the areas that flood, but also about sidewalk repairs, street resurfacing ... I just feel like in order to live in Glencoe, we need to support our infrastructure and really keep our whole vil-

lage safe.”

The third ballot item – HVAC improvements for Village Hall, which also houses the public safety department and Family Service of Glencoe, in addition to myriad administrative uses and functions – passed with 67 percent of the vote.

Dawley said she wasn't as enthusiastic about this item as she was Proposition One, but still voted yes.

“I think it's important to be energy-efficient,” she said.

While the elections for Village, Park, School and Library board positions were uncontested across the board, some new faces entered the fray for the positions, all four-year terms.

The three openings on the Village Board featured three such faces. Peter Mulvaney received 33.7 percent of the vote, with Jonathan T. Vree getting 33.5 percent and Trent Cornell with 32.8 percent.

On the Board of Park Commissioners, Lisa M. Brooks, who has recently served on an advisory committee with the park district, received 51.5 percent, while Dudley Onderdonk, who has served on the Glencoe Park District Beach Advisory Committee, garnered 48.5 percent of the vote.

For the District 35 Board of Education, newcomer Michael Sherman received 32.7 percent, while incumbents Jean Hahn and Gary Ruben received 34.7 and 32.6 percent, respectively.

Newcomer Donna Craven received 33.5 percent in the race for the Glencoe Public Library Board of Trustees. Incumbents Teresa Grosch and Louis B. Goldman received 33 percent and 33.5 percent, respectively.