

New requirement for local clerks slows election results in Macomb County

County clerk Forlini seeking to improve trust in elections



Macomb County Clerk Anthony Forlini speaks at a meeting Wednesday, a day after the election.
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Results from Tuesday's election came into the Macomb County Clerk's Office later than they could have been because of a new requirement by the first-term clerk.

Clerk Anthony Forlini for the first time mandated local community clerks have the USB "sticks" from each voting machine personally delivered to the county Clerk's Office in Mount Clemens so the information on the drive could be uploaded and provide elections officials with access to all ballots, if needed. Each machine has a USB log.

"It wasn't bad," Forlini said, referring to the delay. "It was more work, no doubt."

The last results from 20 communities were delivered to the office at 1:02 a.m. by Eastpointe. Four other communities results came in between around midnight and 12:30 a.m. Polls closed at 8 p.m.

The extra step forced candidates for office in some communities to wait longer. St. Clair Shores City Clerk Mary Kotowski posted the results on the city web site before the sticks were taken to county elections officials so those city council candidates and the public could learn results earlier.

In the past, the clerks would modem the information from the sticks to the county elections office.

The requirement was part of an ongoing effort by Forlini to try to improve trust in the elections in light of unproven claims of voter fraud in the 2020 election. He hired a company, Prov V&V, for \$16,000 to conduct a forensic examination of the county's election server and hard drive. A report on the recent examination should be completed "in a couple of weeks," he said.

Forlini believes Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson should require retention of USB logs for 22 months following an election as required for retention of paper ballots.

Two local clerks said the extra requirement didn't affect their efforts.

Fraser City Clerk Cindi Greenia, who was hired by the city in September, called the requirement "no biggie."

"That didn't bother me a bit," she said. "It was fine. They had to get the information one way or another."

Fraser's results arrived at the county office at 12:18 a.m. Wednesday, elections officials said. Greenia said there were delays because one of the city council candidates received over 500 write-in votes.

Greenia served as the city clerk in Algonac for eight years and worked in the Chesterfield Township Clerk's Office for three years before coming to Fraser.

Shelby Township Clerk Stan Grot, a Republican, said the results from his community were among the last group, arriving at 12:24 a.m., because of the volume of votes.

"We were the largest community other than Sterling Heights," Grot said. "It didn't have an effect on operations at all. The only thing was the candidates didn't have the instant results on winners and losers."

The county's largest community, Warren, was among four that did not have an election Tuesday. The others were Macomb Township, Richmond Township and Memphis.

The turnout was 19.7%, ranging from a low of 9.9% in Roseville and a high of 28.9% in New Baltimore. Chief Elections Clerk Michael Grix called the turnout "average" for an off-year election.

Link to story:

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