

District 27 vote tally confirmed

By Lydia Statz, Union staff writer | Posted: Thursday, April 10, 2014 9:13 am

JEFFERSON — A Wednesday morning recount confirmed incumbent Glen Borland's re-election representing District 27 on the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors.

The official outcome of the April 1 election, which placed Borland ahead of challenger Robert Bennett with 252 to 236 votes, respectively, did not change after the ballots had been retallied by hand and machine.

District 27 includes Wards 3 and 4 in the City of Fort Atkinson.

Borland was one of 25 county supervisors re-elected last week. However, Bennett filed a recount petition Tuesday in wake of his campaign for the seat fell 16 votes short of unseating Borland.

Although he didn't note an official reason for the petition, he said afterward that an error in the ballot printing had led him to question the process.

Per state statute, the order in which candidates are printed on the ballot is determined by a random drawing. Although Bennett's name was supposed to be printed first on the ballot, a clerical error caused his name to be listed second, under Borland's.

"About 3- to 5-percent of people, when they don't know the candidates, will just vote for the top person," Bennett said. "And I lost by about 3.3 percent."

Bennett said he was satisfied with the results of the recount, but had not yet made a decision about whether to pursue the matter any further.

"It's not so much because it was a close election, but because of the principle. If there is a system to do it and it isn't followed, it makes you wonder about the integrity of the process."

During the recount, all the poll record was reviewed to ensure the number of ballots cast matched up with the number of voters recorded, and each ballot was tallied by hand to reconcile it with the number recorded on election day. The ballots then were fed back into the machine to confirm the results, and check that the machines are functioning correctly.

Jefferson County Clerk Barbara Frank said it was common for the vote count to remain unchanged after a recount, and she expected that result even more so in light of the county's new, more accurate ballot scanning machines. This marked the first time the DS200 voting machines were in use, and Frank said they are better at distinguishing lightly marked ballots or votes cast in different colors than the previous machines.

She noted that she had been made aware of the name-listing issue on the morning after the election, and had informed the state Government Accountability Board of the problem. The GAB advised Frank that the error should be noted in its meeting minutes, but that nothing could be done after the fact.

Phil Ristow, the county's corporation counsel, was immediately informed of the matter.

Frank also said she was not terribly concerned that the error caused a large number of voters to vote for Borland instead of Bennett. There were 97 voters throughout the district who cast ballots, but did not vote in the county board race, perhaps indicating that voters who didn't know either candidate simply elected not to vote in the contest.

Regardless, Frank said the department will change its procedure to ensure the error will not happen in future races.

No other recount petitions have been filed with the county at this time. They must be filed no later than 5 p.m. on the third day following the Board of Canvasser's certification of election results, or Friday, April 11.