

Desiderio, McHale, Tighe, Divney, Victorious in Sea Isle

By JOE HART

SEA ISLE CITY — Mayor Leonard Desiderio's supporters outnumbered those for local real estate broker Donald A. Laricks 792 to 585 in the city's historic May 8 election.

In November, Sea Isle voters changed the city's form of government by referendum from a three-member commission with an appointed mayor to a five-member council with a separately elected mayor.

Originally, Laricks was Desiderio's only competition in the race, but another candidate entered at a later date. George "Pat" Haffert, whose family has a long political history in the city, threw his hat into the ring for the mayor's seat.

Many residents thought Haffert would split votes with Laricks giving Desiderio, the edge, but even if Laricks had received all of Haffert's 197 votes he still would have been 10 short of Desiderio's total.

Desiderio, the only incumbent in the race, got just over 50 percent of the vote while Laricks garnered 37 percent and Haffert 12.5 percent.

In addition to being mayor, Desiderio has also been a Republican county freeholder since 2002, on the city planning board since 1991 and a member of the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization since 1997.

In the huge 20 candidate council race, three mem-

bers of the "Restore the Spirit of Sea Isle" ticket were elected.

Former Mayor Mike McHale was the most popular with 819 votes. He will be joined on council by fellow ticket members Mary Tighe, 698 votes, and John Divney, 571 votes.

Tighe is a registered nurse at Cape Regional Medical Center and Divney is a retired GlaxoSmithKline executive.

The group ran on a platform that promised better communication, restoration of the city's family image, better governance and business community development.

"I want to thank the people of Sea Isle for their support," McHale said after his win. "And we all certainly want to live up to their high expectations."

Only Joseph Matyszczak and Robert DiIorio from the "Restore" group failed to be elected.

They were edged out by William Kehner, a former commissioner, with 669 votes and Frank Edwardi, a local Realtor, with 569 votes.

Matyszczak and Joseph LaRosa finished sixth and seventh in totals one vote apart with 484 and 483 respectively.

The new form of government will be sworn in on July 1 after which the council members will draw lots to determine the length of their terms.

Three members will have four-year terms and two will have two-year terms.

In the two months leading up to the transition, the newly elected officials will be working to develop a new administrative code for the city with former Ocean City Administrator Richard Deaney.

"The mayor and commissioners have been very cooperative working with us to prepare," McHale said. "It should be a smooth transition."

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