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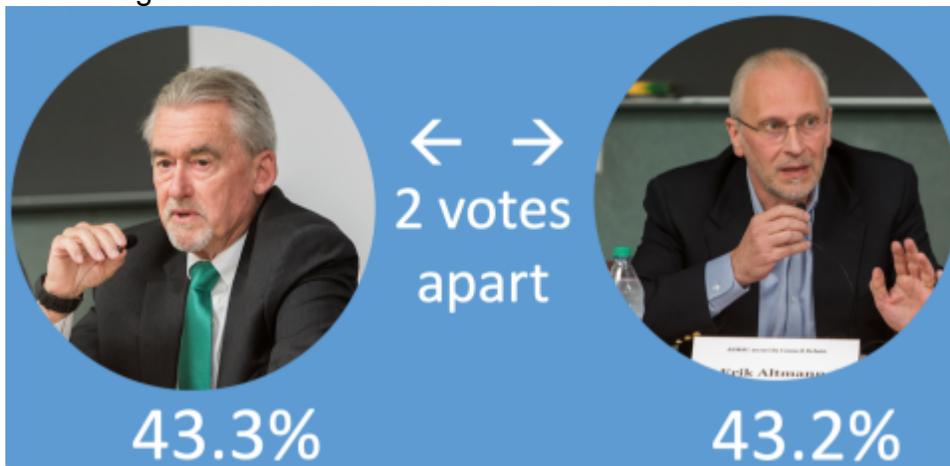
Home > When Will We Know Who Won ? Meadows or Altmann?

When Will We Know Who Won ? Meadows or Altmann? ^[1]

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By:

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Editor's Note: A City Council ?discussion only? meeting previously scheduled for tonight has been canceled. This story has been updated to reflect that change.

With just two votes dividing incumbents Mark Meadows and Erik Altmann in the third-place spot for East Lansing City Council, we can't say for sure which of them will remain on the Council. Here's what we know about the election outcome and what one local political expert makes of the results.

The counts, and the possibility of a recount:

Jessy Gregg and Lisa Babcock were the clear winners in yesterday's election, obtaining 2,944 and 2,871 votes respectively in the unofficial results. Meadows is showing 1,951 votes, and Altmann 1,949 votes.

The East Lansing City Clerk's office tells ELi they have not found any ?provisional ballots? after checking all the precincts, suggesting the unofficial count will probably hold.

The figures in the unofficial count include absentee ballots. Only absentee ballots received by the close of polls yesterday count in the election, so if any more come in today, they will not count.

City Clerk Jennifer Shuster tells ELi, "The Ingham County Board of Canvassers will begin the process of certifying the unofficial election results for the City of East Lansing today. An automatic recount will not take place."

Once the vote is certified by the Board of Canvassers, the fourth-place winner could trigger a recount by asking for the recount and paying \$25 per precinct.

According to the Lansing State Journal, Altmann texted a reporter last night that he was conceding to Meadows, but we have been unable to confirm that Altmann has conceded. In the unlikely event the official vote count overturns the results, a concession by Altmann would not matter "the vote is what matters."

What should we make of these results?

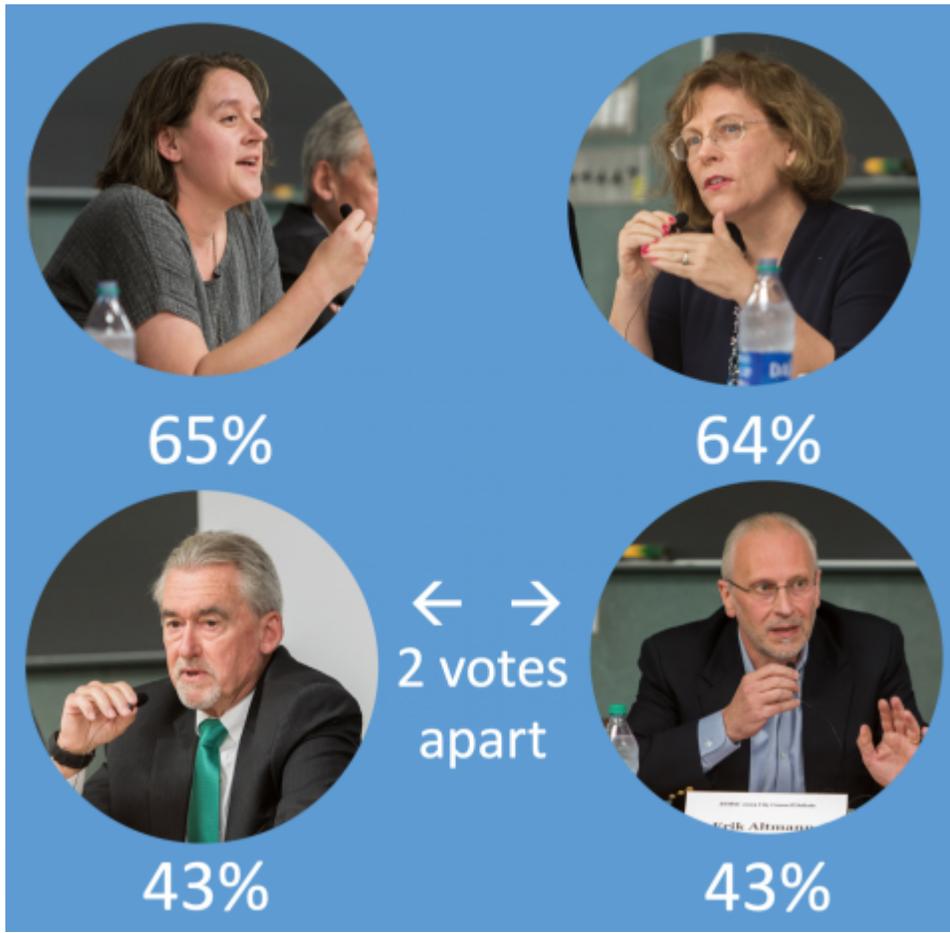
We talked this morning by phone with Mark Grebner, Ingham County Commissioner and local political analyst. Grebner had access to phone polls throughout the last few months. He says the results surprised him.

Based on polling, Grebner had expected Gregg to come in first, Altmann to come in second, and Meadows and Babcock to be vying for the third seat.

But Grebner calls the vote "kind of a blow-out" for Gregg and Babcock.

A total of 4,507 voters participated, which he calls "not a very good turn-out," considering East Lansing has 26,267 registered voters. (That means 17% of those registered voted.)

Of those that voted, 65.3 percent voted for Gregg and 63.7 percent voted for Babcock. Grebner says this shows "they are broadly popular. They got two-thirds of the voters."



By contrast, only 43.3 percent of voters cast a ballot for Meadows and only 43.2 percent for Altmann.

"They were very well known," says Grebner, but "the incumbents were broadly unpopular."

He notes that the average voter threw away 0.4 votes. In other words, many voters did not cast all three votes they had available to them. Rather than casting the third vote for an incumbent or one of the other challengers (John Revitte or Warren Stanfield), many simply voted for Gregg and Babcock.

Grebner finds that interesting because Gregg and Babcock did not specifically run together. In fact, Gregg was featured on two PAC's mailers [2] with Meadows.

"All this tells us that the narrative in many voters' minds was that it was 'time to throw the bums out,'" says Grebner.

Grebner says that this trend emerged relatively late in the election cycle. He says that based on polls and by watching what happened in terms of hints last night about how absentee ballots looked as they were added to the system.

It appears that earlier on in this election cycle, there was more support for Altmann and Meadows.

Grebner is not sure what caused the tipping point to have so many voters go anti-incumbent. He

suspects it was a combination of issues plus people starting to talk to neighbors about ?having had enough? of the current Council, making the election more interesting to voters.

What happens next?

The Board of Canvassers is expected to certify the results in the next couple of days. We?ll know shortly after that whether any candidate will request a recount.

It is expected that next Tuesday evening, November 12, the three people who won the election will be sworn in. The five members of the new City Council ? Jessy Gregg, Lisa Babcock, Ruth Beier, Aaron Stephens, and whoever won the third seat ? will vote to decide who among them will serve as East Lansing?s Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem (substitute mayor).

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Interested citizens can take a survey from ELi about who you want to see as the next Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem by clicking here ^[3]. Taking the survey only conveys your opinion to ELi, not City leaders.

Note: This article was corrected on Nov. 7, 2019, to note that the \$25 recount fee is per precinct.

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[6] <https://eastlansinginfo.org/elections>

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