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Voters trickle to polls in preliminary ballot to replace Turner on council

Posted by Roy Greene February 15, 2011 06:24 PM

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A sampling of candidates' signs today at the Higginson/Lewis K-8 School in Roxbury.

By Matt Rocheleau and Cara Bayles, Town Correspondents

Voters braved a chilly winter wind today as they trickled to the polls in a special preliminary election for the Boston City Council seat held for a decade by Chuck Turner, who was brought down by a **bribery scandal**.

Turnout was expected to be low in the unusual election for District 7, which includes Roxbury and parts of the Fenway, the South End, and Dorchester. As of 6 p.m., 2,370 people among the district's 41,000 eligible voters had cast ballots, according to the Boston Election Department.

Polls close at 8 p.m. [Click here](#) to check your registration status and polling station.

The two top vote-getters will face off in the final election March 15.

Some voters outside the Higginson/Lewis K-8 School in Roxbury -- typically

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one of the busier polling locations in the district -- were optimistic for a post-workday boost in turnout.

"A lot of people work, so we'll see," said LaDarrell Hagans, of Roxbury, a supporter of Tito Jackson, who was political director for Governor Deval Patrick's campaign.

He stood beside fellow Jackson supporter Marie Marshall, a lifelong Fields Corner resident, in the bitter, relentless wind as they clung to a large campaign sign and greeted bundled, hurrying voters and waved to cars passing by.

Marshall and Hagans both said they were encouraged by the number of voters expressing support for their candidate as they entered and exited the school gymnasium.

"It helps, especially to be out here on a cold day like this, when people wave, or give you a thumbs up or honk as they drive by," Marshall said.

During the 2009 City Council campaign, Jackson, a native of Boston's Grove Hall section, missed winning an at-large seat by 11,676 votes.

Many did not journey to the polls today for various reasons.

At a Dudley Square convenience store and pharmacy, Billy Crawford of Roxbury said he had voted for Jackson. But a friend of Crawford's who declined to identify himself said, "What, so there was an election today?"

"He doesn't vote," Crawford said, before explaining his decision. "I voted for Tito because we think we should have a good councilman and because they already ripped apart the two we had so now we need two more." He was referring to Turner and former state senator Dianne Wilkerson, who was ensnared in the [same federal corruption probe](#).

At the Municipal Building on 500 Columbia Road in Dorchester, candidates and their supporters seemed to outnumber actual voters mid-morning, their signs clustered at the entrance to the Uphams Corner polling station.

Lee Kindell, a Harbor Point resident working for the campaign of Cornell Mills, had been passing out fliers in below-freezing temperatures since the poll opened at 7 a.m.

"My face is kind of numb," he said later, as temperatures had just begun to nudge 20 degrees.

Kindell said he was braving the cold to support Mills, who owns a real estate firm and is the son of former state senator Dianne Wilkerson, because he was "the most outstanding and straightforward candidate."

"It's time for young African Americans to get involved in the political forum," he added.

Candidate Althea Garrison, a former state representative, stopped by to check on the numbers.

"I've seen elections where the weather's been nice, and people still don't show up. People are disgusted, but they don't realize that to change things, they need to come out and vote."

With the low turnout, candidates know that the election could be decided by just a few votes.

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"I've been campaigning very hard," said Garrison, who has run repeatedly for the City Council and her former state rep seat. "I'm optimistic I'll do quite well today."

Other candidates vying for the seat in today's vote included: Danielle Williams, who worked in city and state government as a legislative aide to Turner and others; Natalie E. Carithers, a radio personality who has worked for former state representative Willie Mae Allen; and Roy Owens, a teacher and social worker.

Turner, who was sentenced last month to three years behind bars for accepting a \$1,000 bribe, is allowed to vote today, according to Secretary of State's office. Under the state Constitution, only those imprisoned for a felony conviction on the date of the election are barred. Turner is scheduled to report to serve his sentence on March 25.

John Ellement of the Globe staff contributed to this report.

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