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Schools, development on minds as voters head to polls in Boston City Council races

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Incumbent City Councilor Bill Linehan (right) with supporters today at Julie's Family Learning Program on Dorchester Street in South Boston.

By Patrick Rosso, Sara Brown, and Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondents

The state of the city's schools, parking, and crime were among the issues on the minds of Boston voters today as they trickled to the polls for preliminary elections in City Council races.

Candidates were vying for three district seats on the council: District 2, based in South Boston but including parts of the South End, Bay Village, the Leather District, Dorchester, and Roxbury; District 3, which covers Dorchester; and District 7, which consists of Roxbury and parts of the Fenway, South End, and Dorchester

CITY COUNCIL RACE

Polls close at 8 p.m., and the top two vote-getters in each district will square off Nov. 8.

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Scenes from polls

City Council at-large

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District 2

Chinese-American group endorses Lee, Arroyo, Pressley for City Council

Candidates see jump in contributions

Meet the candidates for Boston City Council

District 3

Candidates picking up endorsements

Meet the candidates

District 7

City Council candidates share views on array of topics

Meet the candidates

Turnout was light on a sunny, Indian summer day, but it grew in late afternoon. As of 6 p.m., about 11 percent of eligible voters, or just under 14,000, had cast ballots.

"I work for the schools, so the budget and closings are a big concern," Eleanor Adams said as she cast her ballot at the West 9th Street Senior Center in South Boston. "But since it's a local election, things like keeping the streets clean are important for me."

In the South End, voter Jim Aloisi credited the tenure of Thomas Menino in running the city but supports changes on the 13-member council.

"I think the city is well led in terms of the mayor, but I think the city council needs to be more representative of the community" said Aloisi, who voted at Cathedral High School on Washington Street.

For Brandon, voting at the Foley Apartments in South Boston, parking and development were among his top concerns.

"The economy is tough, we'd like to see something alleviate property taxes," added Brandon, who declined to give his last name. "Make life a little more livable so people don't have to make cuts every month."

In South Boston, District 2 incumbent Bill Linehan and challenger Bob Ferrera, a neighborhood activist, were using campaign trucks to roam around the district and spread their message. Educator Suzanne Lee was also vying for the seat.

At the South Boston branch library, nearly a dozen supporters of the candidates held campaign signs.

In District 3, based in Dorchester, seven candidates are seeking to replace longtime Councilor Maureen Feeney, who is stepping down. They are: Frank Baker, Doug Bennett, Stephanie L. Everett, Craig M. Galvin, Martin J. Hogan, John K. O'Toole and Marydith E. Tuitt.

In District 7, incumbent Tito Jackson, who succeeded disgraced councilor Chuck Turner earlier this year, faces three challengers -- Althea Garrison, Roy Owens, and Sheneal Parker.

"I like Tito, Mr. Jackson," Rosa Venson, 70, said after voting at Symphony Plaza East in the Fenway neighborhood. "I like the things he says. ... I just think he comes across as a really really nice, honest person and I like honest people."

She said she agreed with Jackson on issues that matter to her, like care for the elderly, public safety, and working with young people.

Fenway voter Pam LaRue said she also voted for Jackson. "Tito Jackson sent me a postcard--otherwise I wouldn't have known there was an election," LaRue said.

Mwagale Babumba, 30, was greeting voters outside the Yawkey Club, on Warren Street in Roxbury today, asking them to support Parker. Nearby, a Jackson supporter also held a sign.

Turnout was light at the Yawkey Club, as only about 20 voters had cast

Turnout was light at the Yawkey Club -- only about 30 voters had cast ballots as of 10:30 a.m. -- but both campaigners were hopeful activity would increase in the afternoon.

"It seems like it will pick up when people get out of work," said Babumba, a Fenway resident who said she lives across the street from Parker.

At the Higginson/Lewis K-8 School in Roxbury, where residents from four precincts can vote, Jed Hresko, field director for Parker's campaign, said that from a campaigning standpoint, the spring's recent special election to replace Turner had proved helpful in targeting potential voters.

"One thing about the special election is now we know who the super voters are," said Hresko. "We know exactly who voted in March and who voted in [the special election's preliminary in] February."

Florian Hall in Dorchester was a hub of activity this afternoon. In addition to supporters for the District 3 hopefuls, several candidates for at-large seats were campaigning even though their races are not on the ballot until Nov. 8.

"District races are very special," said Feeney, the outgoing councilor. You have people who know everyone personally so it's always challenging. It's exciting to see so many people [candidates] willing to put themselves on the line. It says a lot about Dorchester."

For more details on all the candidates and where they stand on key issues, go to boston.com/yourtown and click on your specific Boston neighborhood.



Candidates' supporters outside Higginson/Lewis K-8 School in Roxbury.

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