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Baker, O'Toole to vie for District 3

In District 2, challenger Lee tops incumbent

By **Andrew Ryan** | GLOBE STAFF SEPTEMBER 28, 2011

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Frank Baker and John K. O'Toole triumphed yesterday in a hard-fought preliminary election for an open City Council seat representing the heart of Dorchester, finishing first and second in a field of seven candidates.

Baker, a 43-year-old former city worker, topped the ticket, capturing 31 percent of the vote, as he performed exceptionally well in his home neighborhood of Savin Hill.

“People believed in me. They believed in my message,” Baker said last night. “I left my job to campaign full time because I’m going to do this

job full time. People are looking for someone who is going to work hard and be responsive.”

In the final election for District 3 on Nov. 8, Baker will face O'Toole, a 47-year old realtor and union plumber, who won 25 percent of the vote with the help of Mayor Thomas M. Menino's election machine.

“The numbers are showing we had support throughout the whole district,” O'Toole said last night. “We're going to go to work tomorrow. A big portion of Ward 16 [in southern Dorchester] was split. Those are votes to be had.”

Narrowly missing the cut for final election was Craig M. Galvin, 41, who owns a real estate firm on Neponset Avenue. Going into yesterday's preliminary, Galvin had raised more money than all the other candidates. But he finished third with 23 percent of the vote in the race to replace City Councilor Maureen E. Feeney, who has held the seat since 1993, but did not run for reelection.

In District 2, challenger Suzanne Lee beat incumbent City Councilor Bill Linehan last night by 272 votes. Lee, a political newcomer from Chinatown, benefited from high turnout in her neighborhood and in the South End, in a district that also includes South Boston. Lee, who could not be reached last night for comment, will face Linehan in the final election.

“I came in second in the 2007 election, and I was able to win the final,” said Linehan, who also took note of the large turnout yesterday in Chinatown and the South End. “I'll



ESSDRAS M SUAREZ/ GLOBE STAFF

Frank Baker is a former city worker.

have to rally my supporters both other over there and in South Boston.”

A third candidate, Bobby Ferrara, 48, from South Boston, came in third with 25 percent of the vote.

In District 7, which encompasses sections of Roxbury, Lower Roxbury, and the South End, incumbent City Councilor Tito Jackson, 36, sailed into the final election, winning 76 percent of the vote. In November, Jackson will face Sheneal Parker, a political newcomer who finished a distant second with 11 percent of the vote. Two perennial candidates - Althea Garrison and Roy Owens - garnered just 8 percent and 3 percent of the vote.

Across the city, the three preliminary City Council elections drew little interest, in part because there was no mayoral race at the top of the ticket to draw people to the polls. Roughly 14 percent of registered voters cast ballots.

Of the three districts, turnout was highest in District 3, where a crowd of candidates fought for the open seat. Finishing behind Baker, O'Toole, and Galvin were Doug Bennett (9 percent of the vote), Mary-dith E. Tuitt (5 percent), Stephanie L. Everett (4 percent), and Martin J. Hogan (1 percent).

While the candidates talked about improving schools, lowering crime, and other indelible issues, the campaign was more about neighborhood geography than political positions. Baker, for example, grew up as one of 13 siblings in the northern part of the district in Savin Hill. He had eight of his brothers and sisters working the polls yesterday and it showed in Ward 13, where the Bakers live.

“I voted for [Baker] because I’ve known him since he was a kid,” said Stephen McLean, 60, who sat outside the polling place on Dorchester Avenue. “That’s the only reason I voted for him.”



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John K. O'Toole is a 47-year old realtor and plumber.

That dynamic was more complicated for O'Toole and Galvin, who live in voter-rich Ward 16 in southern Dorchester. Many voters leaving the polls said they knew the candidates personally and did not want to say publicly who won their vote, for fear it might hurt a friend. In some cases, the decision split households.

"I voted for Galvin," said Hilary Anderson, a hairstylist who cast her ballot at Florian Hall. "I'm hoping he'll bring more jobs into the community. He talked a lot about green jobs . . ."

Her husband, Sean, cut her off, grumbling cynically under his breath about "green jobs."

"I went with O'Toole," said the Air Force veteran. "I think he's going to be much better at taking care of the working man - police and firefighters."

Neighborhood dynamics also played a significant role in District 2, where Linehan split the South Boston vote with a challenge from Ferrara. Lee is a Chinese immigrant who comes from the opposite end of the district in Chinatown, where she drew most of her support. At a polling place on H Street in South Boston, support seemed high for the incumbent, in part because he fought vehemently for firefighters in their labor dispute with the Menino administration.

"He's a longtime family friend and he supported the firefighters' contract," said Jason Wallace, 44, a firefighter who walked with his 3-year-old son, Joseph, to vote.

But another South Boston resident, Phyllis Allison, 50, went against the neighborhood candidates and stood holding a sign for Lee. "I met her at a neighborhood meeting and I liked what she had to say," said Allison, who was outnumbered 3 to 1 by poll workers supporting the incumbent. "I haven't been that impressed with Linehan."

In Roxbury, challenger Sheneal Parker drew some support from neighbors in the Fenway, like Mwangale Babumb, who urged voters to support Parker outside the Yawkey Club on Warren Street in Roxbury. But



JIM DAVIS/GLOBE STAFF


District 2 challenger Suzanne Lee will face incumbent City Councilor Bill Linehan in the final election.

Jackson's campaign experience helped bring his base to the polls.

"Tito Jackson sent me a postcard," said Pam LaRue, who lives in the Fenway and voted for Jackson. "Otherwise I wouldn't have known there was an election."

Globe correspondents Patrick Rosso and Matt Rocheleau contributed to this report. Andrew Ryan can be reached at acryan@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@globeandrewryan](https://twitter.com/globeandrewryan).

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