

Jan 17, 2008 Cary residents debate instant runoff voting

By David Bracken, Staff Writer

CARY -- About two dozen people showed up this morning in front of the Wake County Board of Elections to debate the effectiveness of instant runoff voting.

The public hearing offered residents a chance to comment on the new voting process that was used for the first time in the October municipal election in Cary.

The comments will be collected and sent to the state Board of Elections, which will then issue a report to the General Assembly. State legislators will decide if North Carolina uses instant runoff voting in future elections.

On the Oct. 9 ballot, Cary voters were asked to name a first, second and third choice for Town Council in their districts. If a voter's preferred candidate finished third in the general election, then their second choice vote would help decide the runoff.

The new process came into play in the District B race, where Don Frantz ended up defeating Vickie Maxwell.

Supporters of instant runoff voting said this morning that the process saves money, increases voter participation and is more democratic.

"Instant runoff voting just makes sense," Marilyn Miller said.

Opponents said the system was confusing and unreliable. For example, in Cary's District B race, the election board had to count the runoff results by hand because there's no software to count the unique ballots.

"Personally, I don't want anybody experimenting with my vote," Chris Telesca said.

Residents have until 5 p.m. Tuesday to submit written comments on instant runoff voting to the Wake County Board of Elections.

Comments can be e-mailed to Cherie Poucher, the board's director, at cpoucher@co.wake.nc.us or faxed to (919) 856-5864. Comments can be mailed to the Wake County Board of Elections, 337 S. Salisbury Street, PO Box 695, Raleigh, N.C. 27602.

Staff writer David Bracken can be reached at (919) 829-4548 or david.bracken@newsobserver.com.

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