

Charter panel scores big win

South Hadley voters defeated a Community Preservation Act question.

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SOUTH HADLEY - Voters yesterday overwhelmingly elected legislative aide Robert G. Judge to the Selectboard and approved forming a charter commission that can look into switching from town meeting to a mayoral form of government.

Voters supported the commission by 1,762 to 660, nearly a 3 to 1 margin.

The strong support marked a second victory for Selectman Carlene C. Hamlin, who spearheaded putting the charter commission question on

the ballot and who was elected to a fourth three-year term.

The election also put Judge, a newcomer to elective office, on the Selectboard, while spelling defeat for Selectman Richard A. Constant. The candidates were in a three-way race for two open seats on the five-member board.

Judge garnered 1,757 votes as compared to the 1,388 won by Hamlin and the 1,343 won by Constant.

Judge attributed his strong win over this two incumbent opponents to keeping to a positive message.

As for what conclusions can be drawn from the Selectboard race, Judge said, "The people in South Hadley care about their government. I've tried to be positive and opti-

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mistic in my campaign, and people want that."

"I'm very glad to have brought the ballot question to the voters of South Hadley to have them weigh in," Hamlin said in reaction to the charter commission victory. "I plan to be intimately involved with the Charter Commission."

Residents narrowly defeated a ballot question that would have adopted the state Community Preservation Act, which would have allowed a 3 percent property tax surcharge to fund historic preservation and getting more affordable housing. The vote was 1,257 against the measure and 1,121 for it.

Voters also elected nine of 12 candidates to what will become the charter commission: Ira J. Brezinsky, Bruce T. Carl, Evelyn G. Chesky, Constance A. Clancy, John E. Duda, Sheila A. Fitzgerald, James W. Menard, William Schenker and Linda W. Young.

Candidates Christopher H. Pyle, Gary P. Steigerwalt and Nathan Therien failed to win enough votes to get seats.

A total of 2,659 or 27.2 percent of the town's 9,656 registered voters cast ballots.