

Contino wins; property tax crushed

With only minutes to go before election results were scheduled to be announced, Dennis Contino sat at a table inside the American Legion, chomping into a slice of pizza and laughing with buddies.

It was as though he were simply hanging out with friends, rather than waiting on results that would change his next four years.

At a few minutes after 8 p.m., Contino felt the phone on his hip vibrate.

This was it.

As Contino heard the news by phone from Fountain Hills interim Town Manager, Kate Zanon, across the room State Rep. John Kavanagh read the same results to the 50 or so attending guests.

Contino - 3,068 votes. Michael Tyler - 2,010.

Suddenly, the gathering of

supporters became a victory party.

Contino snapped his phone closed, sat back and smiled. Supporters approached with pats on the back and hearty handshakes. His wife, Renée, found her way over for a kiss.

Only then could one see Contino's eyes mist up.

Before the results came in, though, Contino claimed he was certain of victory.

"It's a gut feeling," he said. "I haven't been nervous all day."

Contino said he spent the day visiting each of Fountain Hills' five polling places, chatting with residents. Though he came across a handful of Tyler supporters, Contino said most were supporting him.

Further, according to Con-

tino, not one resident claimed to be voting for the primary property tax.

Tax crushed

Indeed, more than four out of five voters said no to the property tax measure. Unofficial results show it being crushed 4,205 to 1,058.

This is the third defeat for a primary property tax in Fountain Hills since 2001.

Neither of the previous results (2002 and 03) were close, but this spread is the widest margin yet.

According to Town Councilman Keith McMahan, the property tax defeat is a clear message from residents that Fountain Hills must concentrate efforts on growing its commercial base.



Dennis Contino, seated with his wife, Renée, celebrates with son Chris and daughter Jennifer, after winning the runoff Town Council election.

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