

Hartnell: Osorio, Serena, Freeman win

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(Photo: Juan Villa, Juan Villa/The Salinas Californian)

Two new members will join the Hartnell College board of governors, while an incumbent keeps his seat, following the results of Tuesday's election.

With 100 percent of the vote reported, Manuel Osorio defeated Incumbent Demetrio Pruneda in Trustee Area 1, David Gomez Serena won in a landslide over Irma C. Lopez and Incumbent Bill Freeman was re-elected.

Osorio took 58.65 percent of the vote to Pruneda's 41.35 percent. Serena won 100 percent; and Freeman took 51.21 percent to Salazar's 48.79 percent.

Pruneda and Osorio were battling for the support of 1,942 voters in TA 1.

Osorio said he felt "very, very good" about his numbers and that he owed the results thus far to people who supported him and his experience in community college.

He says he wants to create "a healthy and nurturing environment" for Hartnell students.

Pruneda, a retired schoolteacher, received the endorsement of the Monterey Bay Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

Osorio is challenging Pruneda for a second time after running against Pruneda in 2011. Then, Pruneda won with 53.8 percent of the vote. The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Salinas Valley Leadership Group have endorsed Osorio this time around.

Nonprofit program officer Aurelio Salazar Jr. challenged Freeman for the 1,113 votes cast in TA 2.

The Monterey Bay Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO backed 12-year board member Freeman. Salazar received the Democratic endorsement and the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce endorsement.

Earlier in the evening, with 57 percent of the votes counted, Freeman said he was confident, despite the close numbers.

"More people know me than know my opponent," Freeman said. "But I'd like to see the lead increase."

Salazar said his campaign had been intentional about involving young people, but that a lot of the voters for the race were absentee.

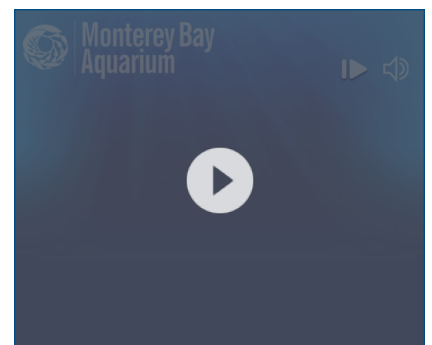
"In a way, this race was decided weeks ago," Salazar said.

At an election forum in mid-October, Freeman claimed his leadership had put Hartnell "in a better financial situation," according to a news report.

Salazar responded by suggesting that Freeman's peers do not respect him as a leader, pointing to the fact that his opponent never served as board president.

-- By Natalie Jacewicz, njacewicz@gmail.com

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