

Written by Administrator  
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Richmond voters passed up two establishment candidates and ushered in new leaders to steer the city, a move that changes who holds the majority on the City Council.

The shift will likely affect decisions on major issues including the proposed \$1.2 billion casino-hotel resort at Point Molate overlooking the Bay. Voters defeated the advisory Measure U on a casino with 57.5 percent voting no. And with the approval of two new council members, voters created a council majority that opposes gaming on the waterfront.

"People want to see something better there," said Jovanka Beckles, who won a council seat Tuesday night after narrowly missing victory in 2008. "With that resounding no (on Measure U) and a progressive majority on the City Council, we're going to be able to entertain other ideas for Point Molate."

A council vote on Point Molate appears bound for early next year, when the council must decide whether to certify the project's environmental report and turn over the land to developer Upstream and the Guidiville Band of Pomo Indians.

On Tuesday, Mayor Gayle McLaughlin, a Green Party member, survived a barrage of attack ads in October to win re-election in a three-way race with 40 percent of the vote. She beat one of her most vocal critics, Councilman Nat Bates, who captured 36.5 percent of the vote. Former Councilman John Ziesenhenné trailed both at 22.8 percent.

In the race for three open council seats, veteran candidate Corky

Booze emerged as the top vote-getter with 14.8 percent after nine previously unsuccessful election attempts. Incumbent Jim Rogers and Beckles, a Richmond Progressive Alliance member, captured the other two seats, with 14.3 percent and 13.2 percent of the vote, respectively.

The trio pushed out incumbents Myrna Lopez and Maria Viramontes by at least 900 votes.

Richmond elections are well-known for drawing big money and big spending, but the winners

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were not the largest spenders. In the  
outspent McLaughlin almost 2-1.

mayor's race, for example, Bates

"Having a lot of money doesn't guarantee victory all the time," Rogers said. "It certainly helps but some voters get annoyed when you have special interests pounding on somebody. It can be a double-edged sword."

"The influence of big corporations is something that doesn't hold sway in Richmond anymore," McLaughlin said.

McLaughlin wants to foster a more diverse economy that reduces the city's financial reliance on the Chevron refinery and embraces green technology.

Beckles said she looks forward to creating more youth activities to help stop violence. That means joining with the school district on after-school programs, reviewing staffing levels at

libraries and community centers, and talking to youths and groups to brainstorm ideas.

Rogers wants a permanent plan to spare neighborhood schools from closure. He wants to continue funding road repairs, increase the number of police officers by at least 30 and require that problem liquor stores pay for police patrols to deal with issues around the stores.

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