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**Tim West wins Chiefland election by choosing the long straw; 90-90 vote is broken by drawing lots - per the law**



**Levy County Judge Tim Browning holds the two straws, one of which is only slightly longer.**

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**Story, Photos and Video**

**By Jeff M. Hardison © Aug. 7, 2018 at 11:08 p.m.**

**CHIEFLAND** – It was the most classic reminder that – every vote counts.

The municipal race for Chiefland City Commission, Seat 4, was decided Tuesday night (Aug. 7) by a coin toss to decide who would draw the first straw, and then with candidate Tim West drawing the winning longer straw over incumbent City Commissioner Teresa Barron.

<https://youtu.be/2flZAcMypZw>

**In this video, Levy County Judge Tim Browning throws a coin, which is called, and then he holds straws, where one long straw is selected as the winner.**

**Video By Jeff M. Hardison**

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Before the votes were counted, a group of people stood across the street from the polling place. Seen here are (from left) Colin Rogers, Alex Barron, Teresa Barron, Eddie Barron, Audrey Munson, Hailie Asbell, Robert Asbell, Romaine Asbell and Leah Blich.



Working at the process to tally the votes are (front row, from left) Mary Jane Deas, inspector, and Cheffland Deputy City Clerk Laura Cain. In the back row are (from left)

Scott Anderson, Police Chief James Anderson, City Manager (and Ex Officio City Clerk) Mary Ellzey and Levy County Judge Tim Browning. City Clerk Ellzey is the supervisor of elections for elections within the city. Judge Browning here is serving as the chairman of the canvassing board, upon which Chief Anderson and Chief Harris are serving.

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**Poll Deputy Kary Colson (in green vest) watches as Voting Precinct Assistant Clerk Deborah Anderson puts votes into the machine to be counted.**



**Levy County Supervisor of Elections Tammy Jones (at right) was on the scene to assist in the election process. She allowed the city to use the machines owned by the county.**

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**The canvassing board, and Chiefland City Election Supervisor Mary Ellzey and Levy County Supervisor of Elections Tammy Sullivan confer.**



**Canvassing Board Chairman Tim Browning reveals the count of votes as Chiefland Supervisor of Elections Mary Ellzey and Levy County Supervisor of Elections Tammy Jones listen.**

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**Candidates Teresa Barron (left) and Tim West (center) listen to how the machines will be checked in the recount as Levy County Supervisor of Elections Tammy Jones explains this part of the voting process to the candidates.**

**Candidates Teresa Barron and Tim West shake hands after the straws are drawn. Both candidates ran very civil campaigns.**

Levy County Judge J.T. "Tim" Browning sat as the chairman of the city election canvassing board, with Police Chief Scott Anderson and Fire Chief James Harris joining him on that board.

There were 18 ballots by mail sent out. There were 14 of those vote-by-mail, or absentee, ballots returned and counted.



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On Election Day, Barron received 78 votes. On Election Day, West received 88 votes. Added to that for Barron were 12 mail-in ballots. West saw two mail-in ballots cast for him.

Both candidates scored 90 votes.

The judge followed Florida law to the letter. The ballots were counted again by machine. There were no provisional ballots -- that is a ballot with a questionable signature or identification.

There will be a manual recount of all of the ballots on Thursday (Aug. 9) at 5 p.m. in Chiefland City Hall -- the Hardy Dean Sr. Municipal Building. Given that the machines brought to the city by Levy County Supervisor of Elections Tammy Jones proved over-and-over again to be reliable, and given that the votes were counted and recounted with the exact same results on both machines, the manual recount may be more of an exercise than something with any anticipation of a different result.

Judge Browning explained that the machines were tested for accuracy. The recount by machine showed 90-90 as the accurate count.

Levy County Judge Browning read Florida Statute 100.181, which states:

"Determination of person elected.—The person receiving the highest number of votes cast in a general or special election for an office shall be elected to the office. In case two or more persons receive an equal and highest number of votes for the same office, such persons shall draw lots to determine who shall be elected to the office."

To determine who would pick the straw first was decided by a coin toss. West said that "ladies first" to be the way to decide who would call the coin toss in the air.

Barron called "tails" as the judge threw the coin in the air. When it came up "heads," that resulted in West winning the first draw of a straw.

The judge took extraordinary care to assure the longer straw could not be determined by looking at the straws he held.

West chose first and he picked the longer straw.

Shortly after the win, newly-elected incoming Chiefland City Commissioner West responded to a question about how he felt after winning the straw draw.

"I feel a little nervous," West said after the win, "a little excited. I feel my heart torn for my opponent, because I know she did a really good job running."

He went on to say what people may remember as they watch him as a city commissioner.

"I will listen to what the people say," West said, "and see what brought them here (to Chiefland), what keeps them here and what makes them want to come back. So, I feel mixed emotions now. This was a very interesting thing that just happened."