

# THE Mecklenburg TIMES

CHARLOTTE, N.C. • FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2007

## Primaries marked by low turnout

By CAROLYN STEEVES

MECKLENBURG TIMES

CHARLOTTE — When polls opened at 6:30 a.m. for Tuesday's Republican primaries in Charlotte, county elections director Michael Dickerson wasn't expecting a surge of voters.

The actual turnout of about 5 percent didn't surprise him. "About what we expected," he said Wednesday. "We were saying about 5 to 6 percent with turnout."

For those who did participate in picking candidates to compete in November's general election for city offices, the Democratic process was taken seriously.

Rick Baker, a salesman, showed up at his polling place, Community Middle School, around 8:30 a.m.

"I always vote," Baker said, "I make fun of people who don't."

Baker moved to Charlotte from Union County and has lived here for more than 25 years. Once he heard more about the primary elections, he researched the candidates and found out as much about them as he could.

He is concerned about the growth of Charlotte and rising taxes. "We seem to have a city that thinks growth is the greatest thing in the world and growth is not the greatest thing" said Baker.

"What I see is that they keep spending money and annexing territory and they keep saying that this is going to help us grow, this is going to bring in taxes," Baker said. "Then the next thing I know, taxes keep going up, infrastructure, cost of sewer lines and water lines all keep going up, so I don't see this helping us at all."

Baker said he voted because he wants "a City Council that

SEE PRIMARIES PAGE 3

## Primaries

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

doesn't keep putting in arenas that I don't want and they don't keep annexing territory I don't want and they don't let the contractors



Mecklenburg Times photos by Carolyn Steeves

**ABOVE:** Charlotte's Mayor Pat McCrory, saying he's worried by the low turnout, waits to greet voters at Alexander Graham Middle School.

go rampant."

Later in the day, over at Alexander Graham Middle School, Mayor Pat McCrory stood in front of the polling place to greet voters and encourage more people to vote. He reminded people that the polls closed at 7:30 p.m.

The crowd greeting him may have been a bit misleading. Many were attending a school event scheduled from 6 to 8 p.m. on the same night as the elections. Only a handful was entering to vote.

Penn Cassels, who works in the construction business, was one of the citizens who did go there to cast his vote.

"I think it's important to come out and vote every time we have the opportunity," he said. "I can't complain about it unless I go out and elect the people that run for the offices."

Cassels wants to make sure that elected officials serve the best interest of the public, conserve and effectively spend money and that, "Everything's done clean and honest in the political arena."

Also voting at the middle school was Steve Ball, who sells plastics.

"I'm a registered Republican," Ball said, "I've always voted in every election I've been able to vote in."

Ball explained that since he has

a family and kids, some of his biggest concerns are crime, the growth of the city and how that growth is managed.

"I'm a native Charlottean, so I just want to make sure I can do my part to see Charlotte grow the way I want it to," he said.

The voting process itself went off without a problem. None of the voters interviewed said they had any problems with the ballots or the machines.

"It actually went very, very smoothly all yesterday," Dickerson said, "Probably indicative of a small turnout, but very, very smoothly."

Dickerson is pleased with how the election procedure went yesterday saying the workers at the polling places did a "tremendous job."

The City of Charlotte uses touch-screen voting machines. According to Dickerson they have used the machines or similar models for "about 20 years." He said there were no problems with the equipment or reporting votes on Tuesday.

Cassels found his voting experience to be easy as well, saying that it was the, "First time I've used that machine and it's wonderful. I like it. They've got the paper ballot to back it up in case there's an electronic failure, so I like that."