

Warming up for the election

By **BRENDA BARBOSA**

STAFF WRITER

The sound of ballots scanning and tape printing echoed off the concrete walls of Charlotte County's elections warehouse, a small, windowless building tucked behind a law enforcement training center and a gun range off Airport Road in Punta Gorda.

Seven staffers from the Supervisor of Elections Office and Punta Gorda City Clerk Karen Smith, who chairs the canvassing board, gathered there Monday morning to test all 12 DL 200 voting machines and six ADA iVotronic machines that will be used during the Nov. 5 District 5 City Council election.

Though the public was formally invited to attend the testing, it's not surprising that during a small, off-year election race like this, no one showed up, officials said.

"It's really kind of boring," said Lori Harney, IT director for the county elections office. "Usually you'll see the candidates show up for like 10 minutes and then leave."

The candidates for this particular race are former Burnt Store Isles Homeowners Association president Charlie Council and former Team Punta Gorda Executive Director Nancy Prafke, both of whom are vying for the District 5 seat being vacated by current Mayor Bill Albers.

Under state statute, machines are required to be tested to ensure "logic and accuracy," the process by which voting equipment is configured, tested and certified for accuracy prior to an election. Each component is tested to verify that it is fully functional and free from mechanical problems, and that each voting unit contains the appropriate ballot styles for its designated polling place.

"Every race, every candidate, in every precinct," said Assistant Supervisor of Elections Lou Spacco. "On this ballot, there is only one race so it won't be as complex a test as we would normally run on elections, but we're doing exactly the same thing.

"In this case, because it's a small election we're testing all of the pieces of equipment that will be used."

During a general election when all machines are in use, tests are conducted on a sampling of the machines.

The machines are tested to verify they initially print out a "zero" tape before test ballots are entered.

"We print the results and they will check them against the predetermined results to make sure they are accurate," Spacco said. "Then we will bring all the election media up to the courthouse and put it in our software, where it's all added together."

Next Tuesday, there will be a total of 12 DL 200 machines (the large, standup machines); two at each of the six polling sites. And six ADA machines (audio ballots).

As machines are being tested, if an issue arises, the canvassing board would address it. Luckily, no problems arose during Monday's test.

"We have 100 percent accuracy," Harney said. "That's always a good thing."

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ELECTION DAY PARTICULARS

Polling locations will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Election Day. Voting is at-large, and residents of all Punta Gorda districts may vote. Note: The polling location for registered voters in precinct 29 has changed for the city election. Please note the new polling location. Following are the precinct locations for voting:

- **Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center**, 75 Taylor St. — Precincts 3, 4, 19 and 28
- **Punta Gorda Isles Civic Association**, 2001 Shreve St. — Precincts 29 and 35 (the area

- within city limits)
- **Isles Yacht Club**, 1780 West Marion Ave. — Precincts 34 and 41
- **South County Civic Center**, 1120 1st Ave. — Precinct 42 (the area within city limits)
- **South County Regional Park**, 670 Cooper St. — Precincts 60 and 66 (areas within city limits)
- **Congregational United Church**, 1201 Aqui Esta Drive — Precincts 64 and 65 (area within city limits)

For more information regarding the city election, please contact the City Clerk's Office at 941-575-3369.

— *Provided by
Punta Gorda city clerk*



SUN PHOTO BY BRENDA BARBOSA

Charlotte County Supervisor of Election staff test voting machines Monday morning in preparation for Punta Gorda City Council District 5 election on Nov. 5. Republican candidates Charlie Council and Nancy Prafke are vying for the city council seat being vacated by Mayor Bill Albers.