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Camille Rose Elected Selectman in Close Contest, Heavy Turnout

By MAX HART

In a race that pitted experience against idealism, Camille Rose defeated Faith Vanderhoop for a seat on the board of selectmen in Aquinnah's annual election on Wednesday.

A record turnout of voters came out to the polls in the second smallest town in the commonwealth. In fact, two-thirds of the 368 registered voters - a total of 248 voters - cast ballots on a bright spring day. The final tally was 131-111.

"I am so grateful to all the people who supported me, and I am excited to get to work," an elated Ms. Rose said yesterday. "I think the town is in good position to move forward, and I look forward to serving."

"I wanted to represent the community and the town as a whole," Ms. Vanderhoop said. "People are very concerned about the representation they have here in town, and I think the vote showed that people are willing to get out and vote to have their voices heard. A lot of people came out to say 'We care about who represents us.'"

In the only other contested race, incumbent Michael Stutz defeated Richard Lee 140-93 for a three-year term on the board of assessors.

Voters also said yes to three ballot questions. They overwhelmingly supported the creation of the Martha's Vineyard Housing Bank, 175-44, and approved changing both the tax collector and treasurer positions from elected to appointed posts.

Ms. Rose, 67, is a municipal veteran, having sat on town committees for more than 30 years. Most notably, she was a longtime member of the planning board and was instrumental in bringing Aquinnah under the protection of a district of critical planning concern (DCPC). She ran in her first race for selectman last year, challenging incumbent Michael Hebert, and losing by only six votes.

Ms. Rose said her plan for Aquinnah now that its financial situation has improved focuses on exploring new streams of revenue for the town. She said she intends to investigate the feasibility of taxing home rentals as well as working with fellow selectman Jim Newman on an alternative energy project that could save the town money in energy costs.

"There are other things, too, like the current negotiations with the bus companies that come to Aquinnah, that are in the works, so I think we have a solid base to work from," she added.

Ms. Rose's victory also signals the end of an era: For the first time in more than 30 years, a member of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) will not sit on the board of selectmen. However, Ms. Rose said yesterday that one of her priorities will be to work more closely - and openly - with the tribe.

"We need to discuss our relationship, our concerns, but we have to do it publicly," she said. "No more private meetings, let's put it all on the table. Are there divisions in town? Certainly. I think yesterday's vote points that out."

Ms. Vanderhoop is a tribal member.

Ms. Rose said she would like to hold regular public town meetings with the tribe to foster greater trust and understanding.

"The enmity has to stop, on both sides," she said. "We are all together in this tiny town."

Yesterday's election marked Ms. Vanderhoop's first foray into politics, and while she admitted she was green on some of the financial issues facing the town, she said her platform was rooted in acting as an advocate for a younger generation. Ms. Vanderhoop, who is 26, said she is interested in continuing her political career, although she will begin by seeking election to one of the town's various committees.

"I think the finance committee would be a good place to start next time," she said. "In the meantime, I certainly would like to get involved in bettering town-tribe relations."

Elected without contest were:

Audrey Jeffers-Mayhew, treasurer for one year; Sarah Saltonstall, board of health for three years; Nancy Delaney, library trustee for three years, and Camille Rose and Peter Temple, planning board for three year terms.

Carolyn Feltz was also elected to a three-year term as town clerk as a write-in candidate.

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