Sales tax revision okay convi

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By Bob Fell
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Rapid City voters turned out in record numbers yesterday Tuesday to approve a revised city sales tax which was designed to help finance a new $4 million civic center facility.

The issue, which was referred to the voters was approved in the city council and the ordinance passed by an impressive 62.8% per cent. The issue needed only a 50 per cent plus one favorable margin for passage. The unofficial tally is 6,000 in favor to 3,388 opposed.

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The official figures will be announced Friday after the city council conducts a canvass, but the results are not expected to change appreciably.

The new system of city sales tax will go into effect May 1. The new system has revised the administrative details and procedures can be set up by then.

Under the new system, the present one per cent city tax will be removed from edible food items in grocery stores and on prescription drugs. Hotel and motel rooms, restaurants and liquor will be subject to a 5-cent city sales tax and all other retail sales will be subject to 1.5 per cent city tax.

The new system is expected to raise an additional $400,000 a year which is earmarked for the construction of a proposed two-story civic center and civic arena.

When assured of the results of the sales tax revision proposal, "satisfied" was a mild word to describe Mayor Don Barnett's reaction.

After expressing his appreciation to all who helped in the effort to pass the measure, Barnett had this to say:

"I am so very pleased that the citizens of Rapid City have such a high trust in their elected officials. I am so happy to hear from the newspapers that the voters and taxpayers are willing to pay the price of constructing this facility which has been needed for more than 20 years.

"The first lesson to be learned from Tuesday's election is that the people of Rapid City have a very optimistic attitude about the future of their city.

"Thelesson to be learned from the election Tuesday, is that the voters and taxpayers of Rapid City will not be fooled by last minute tactics to confuse the major issues facing our community.

"The mayor went on to say that he anticipates the next three months will be an important period of decision making for the city government.

"We must select the architects, begin the purchase of land and continue our efforts to secure federal funding to assist in the construction of the civic center.

"He said, "Our job today is bigger than yesterday, but we look forward to the weeks ahead with a high degree of optimism and enthusiasm."

"Rapid City," said the mayor, "has definitely moved from an era of stagnation into a new period of optimism and growth."

The measure carried in every precinct and ward in the city with the Third Ward giving the issue the biggest majority of more than 60 per cent. Lightest majority was in the Fourth Ward with slightly more than 52 per cent favorable margin.

In fact, in the Third Precinct of the Fourth Ward the measure squeaked by with only a two-vote margin.

The total vote was the largest turnout in any regular municipal election in Rapid City with the unofficial total of 9,500 citizens casting ballots. There was a discrepancy because in the Fourth and Fifth wards, more voters cast ballots for candidates than for the sales tax issue. In the Second Ward, the only other with a contest, the issue drew 41 more votes than the candidates cast for the three candidates.

The biggest previous turnout in a regular municipal election in the city was 9,084 on April 13, 1965, which ended in a run-off between Fred Duske and Phil Shroeder, both former mayors.

It was not the largest turnout for a municipal election, however. The record was set last April in a runoff election between Mayor Don Barnett and former acting mayor John Barness. In that special election, 9,996 voters went to the polls.

The total vote used in the unofficial Journal table was arrived at by adding the largest vote in each precinct, whether it was for the sales tax issue.

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or for candidates. However, the actual total vote for the city may be larger than 9,700.

It is possible, for instance, in Wards 2, 4 and 5 that the largest figure used does not represent the total vote. In Ward 2 there were 1,948 votes cast for aldermen and 1,887 cast on the sales tax so the Journal took the 1,948 as the total vote. However, some voters could have voted on the sales tax only and their votes would not be included in the total.

The reverse is true in Ward 4 where 1,610 votes were cast on the sales tax, 1,887 votes for the aldermanic candidates and 1,610 votes were taken as the total. However some voters could have cast votes for one of the candidates while not voting on the sales tax issue and the vote would be larger. A final figure on the total city vote will have to await the canvass on Friday.