Sean M. Spiller. Photo by Kevin Sanders for the New Jersey Globe.

Montclair VBM turnout at 24%

Spiller faces Baskerville in race for open mayoral seat

By David Wildstein, May 12 2020 10:36 am

Turnout in today's mayor and council races in Montclair is high, with 24% of all voters already returning mail-in in a race that is all-VBM. That means a 285% increase over the 2016 in-person election, with more ballots expected to arrive today – and likely into Thursday.

As of early this morning, 7,843 of the township's 33,292 eligible voters had returned their ballots to county election officials.

In 2016, 2,036 votes were cast in an election where Mayor Robert Jackson and five of six council seats were unopposed. Turnout was at 6%.

Two members of the township council, Sean M. Spiller and Renee Baskerville, are running for mayor and heading slates of council candidates for all six seats.

Spiller is a rising star in New Jersey politics. He is the vice president of the New Jersey Education Association and could be on a path to lead the state's largest public employee union at some point.

Running for township council on Spiller's ticket are three incumbents: at-large Councilor (and former mayor) Robert Russo; 1st Ward Councilor William Hurlock, the lone registered Republican in local government; and 2nd Ward Councilor Robin Schlager. He's joined on the ticket by at-large candidate Roger Terry and Lori Price Abrams, who is seeking Spiller's 3rd Ward seat.

Baskerville's slate includes at-large candidates Peter Yacobellis and James Cotter, John Hearn (1st Ward), Chrissy Thomas (2nd Ward), Maggie Joralemon (3rd Ward), and David Cummings, who is running for the 4th Ward seat being vacated by Baskerville.

Cummings is running unopposed.

VBM ballots have been returned at a higher rate in the 1st Ward (2,105) and 2nd Ward (2,184). Returned mail-in ballots are around the same in the 3rd Ward (1,738), Spiller's base, and 4th Ward (1,816), where Baskerville lives.

Carmel Loughman is seeking an at-large seat as an independent.

Councilor-at-large Rich McMahon is not seeking re-election.

Ballots must be mailed by 8 PM Tuesday to be counted, although election officials will accept ballots postmarked by the deadline until close of business on Thursday.

Gov. Phil Murphy ordered the election to be held entirely by mail to avoid the spread of COVID-19 through voters voting in person.

In the only contested race of 2016, Spiller defeated Maureen Edelson by a 73%-27% margin.

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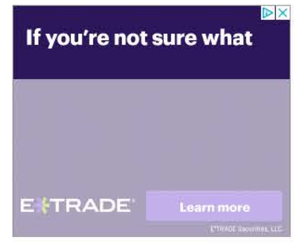

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