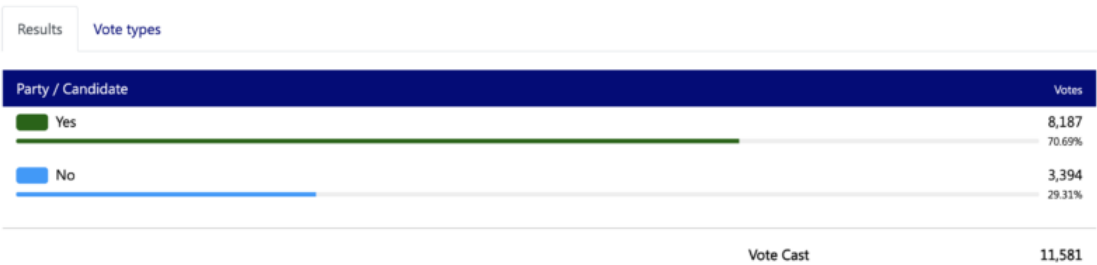


Vote Montclair Declares Victory in Elected BOE Referendum

Liz George - November 3, 2021



Montclair, NJ – The Election night results are unofficial, but they show Montclair voters supporting the move to an elected Board of Education.



In a statement released Tuesday, Vote Montclair states:

The effort to give Montclair an elected Board of Education can be measured in decades, and discussions around the issue have often been bitter. Advocates of both positions were at times too quick to level charges of underhanded tactics and shadowy financial connections. But it is clear that most who have been in the fray have been driven by what they truly believe is in the best interests of the Township, and its children. Those who are now celebrating should be especially mindful of this. And everyone should be grateful for the enormous contribution of many of those who opposed this referendum, who in some cases fought for years for the cause of educational equity, often at no small personal cost.

It should also be remembered that this isn’t an ending but a beginning. An elected board will mean regular elections for this crucial body, starting with a special election for two seats early in

2022, and eventually annual contests for three seats every November, as well as occasional referenda on budget issues. On some of these future election days those who felt like they lost today are likely to feel like they won, and vice-versa. That's how democracy is supposed to work.

Councilor at Large Peter Yacobellis, the only councilor to publicly support a move to an elected BOE from an appointed system, writes:

Tonight, Montclair voters overwhelmingly chose to change how our schools are governed to a system where we directly elect our school board. The people want a responsive government that is held accountable. They want a say in policy and they want investment in our schools to bring our district into the 21st century. I urge the Board of Education to consider what level of investment is needed in the short term and begin the process of putting a bond to the voters as soon as possible.

This was an emotional and divisive debate but now it's time for all sides to come back together and get to work on behalf of Montclair's kids. They deserve our best. Our teachers and school staff deserve our best. We are a special town with a unique history that we must and I will work to safeguard. I just truly hope all of this passion turns into people having sustained participation because that's what it's going to take to truly change things.

I congratulate Vote Montclair and the League of Women Voters for the vital engagement of our citizenry in this decision. We are going to need civic organizations more than ever to help keep the voters engaged and informed as we transition to an elected school district in the years ahead and particularly as we consider who we will elect to those seats.

Montclair Mayor Sean Spiller, who would lose the power to appoint individuals as members to Board of Education, said in April he would be fully [supportive of moving to an elected Board of Education](#). Spiller had this to say today about the election results:

"Montclair is a community that cares deeply about our public schools. Even when there are differing opinions, ultimately I believe that every Montclair resident is guided by a heartfelt desire to provide the best possible education for our students,

Voters have made the decision on what mechanism for naming members of the board of education will best serve students, residents and taxpayers.

I have the utmost confidence in the judgement of Montclair residents and I know that we will continue to work together to ensure our public schools are second to none."

Vote Montclair, founded by Erik D'Amato, knew in August of 2020 that there was [strong support for an elected BOE](#). In 2009, a different grassroots movement, led by Montclair Watch, was unsuccessful in efforts to move Montclair to an elected BOE.

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Councilor Bob Russo shares image of an overwhelming Yes vote at one district at Buzz Aldrin school.

Councilor at Large Bob Russo, who previously served as mayor of Montclair, said he congratulated the Elected BOE winners for a successful campaign and hoped they would work together with the Council to implement the new system of governing our schools.

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