

# local news

## After the ballot

*Gail Shibley is the only opposed queer candidate to survive the primary*

by Inga Sorensen

It's a brand new election," chirped an earnest Gail Shibley just two days after the May 21 primary, a moment when the openly lesbian Portland City Council candidate was still the top vote-getter in the eight-person race. "I think the effectiveness [of a campaign] is reflected in the number of votes one gets. There were eight candidates in this race, three of them serious, and we came in first. That says something."

Before the absentee ballots were counted, Shibley led her closest rival, Portland lawyer Jim Francesconi, by roughly 400 votes. After the tally, however, Francesconi had garnered 27,640 votes, or 31.25 percent, while Shibley grabbed 27,186 votes, or 30.74 percent. Erik Sten took a distant third place, with 20,391 votes, or 23.05 percent.

Locked in a virtual dead heat, Francesconi and Shibley face a run-off during the Nov. 5 general election. The winner of that contest will fill the council seat of Mike Lindberg, who is leaving the post after 17 years of service.

"We are absolutely thrilled about Gail," says Barry Pack, executive director of Right to Privacy, a statewide gay, lesbian and bisexual rights organization. "This is a great opportunity for our community."

Some political observers agree that Shibley's campaign—up to the May primary, that is—appeared relatively lackluster, especially when compared to the spirited efforts of both Sten and Francesconi.

"I guess that [perception] depends on where you're standing," says Shibley, a three-term state representative and city employee who has handled neighborhood projects, particularly involving traffic safety.

"Looking at my race up close and personal, I can tell you that I've got lots of energy and did run a very energized campaign. We just did things in a very targeted way," she says.

"I think everyone recognizes that it was not the best or most energetic campaign," says Pack. "Maybe [Shibley] was caught a little by surprise by the fact that it was such a hotly contested race. I hope she takes a vacation, gets some rest, and comes back to run a really vigorous campaign over the next several months."

Shibley's campaign was also marred by some controversy stemming from her acceptance of \$9,000 in campaign contributions from the owner and two employees of Fantasy for Adults Only video stores.

Oregonian associate editor David Reinhard publicly took Shibley to task for her decision to take money from what he called a "pornography empire," and chastised her for her "frightening amorality." Shibley remains steadfast in her belief that people have the right to participate in the political process and contribute to the candidates of their choice.

Human rights activist Kathleen Saadat and former Portland Police Chief Tom Potter, a well-

known friend of the sexual minorities community, surprised some by backing Francesconi in the race, and despite being the only candidate to have held elective office, Shibley failed to receive primary endorsements from *The Oregonian* or *Willamette Week*.

"And yet Gail came through. She got a lot of votes, and we are delighted," says Pack.

Shibley says she plans to take a little vacation and will begin making decisions about the next leg of her campaign "within the next couple of weeks."

"I'm sure there are a whole host of decisions we'll be making," she told *Just Out* during a May 23 conversation. "The absentee ballots haven't been counted yet. We don't even have the voter abstracts. A huge piece of our decision-making process is dependent upon first finding out what we did right and what we could do better."

Shibley wasn't the only out gay person running in the May 21 primary. A handful of other sexual minority candidates ran unopposed, including Oregon state Reps.

George Eighmey (D-Portland) and Cynthia Wooten (D-Eugene); political newcomer Elli Work, a Bend Democrat running for state representative; and state Rep. Kate Brown (D-Portland), who is running for a state Senate seat. Brown is the only candidate who is unopposed in the general election.

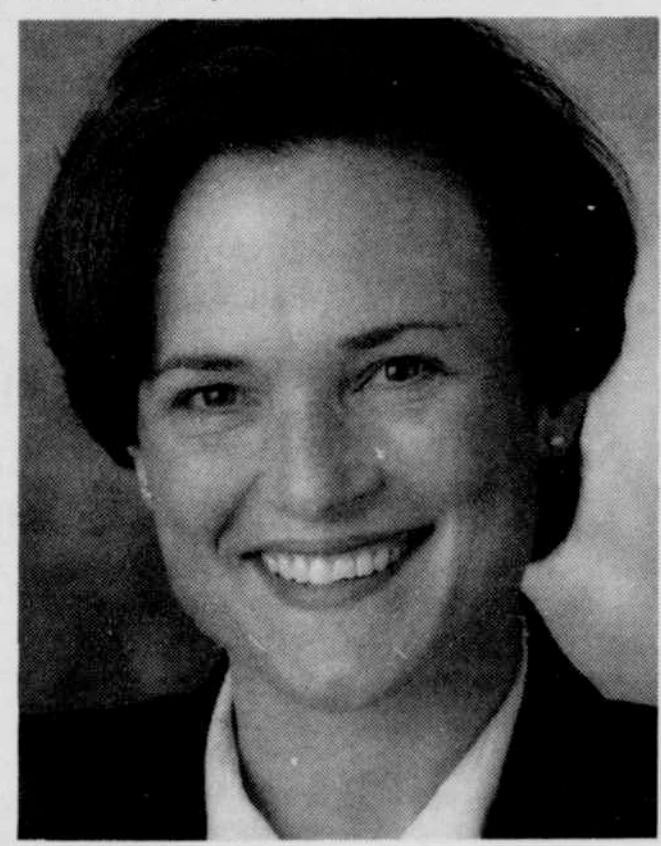
Portlander Frank Dixon, a consumer rights attorney and neighborhood activist, was unsuccessful in his bid for a state Senate seat. Dixon, a Democrat, faced a difficult battle with primary opponents Kent Snyder, Ginny Burdick and former state Rep. Tom Mason. Burdick soundly defeated her opponents.

Bob Duehmig, a Democratic candidate for House District 12, also faced a tough race. The 31-year-old legislative specialist for the Oregon Federation of Teachers, Education and Health Professionals took on a slate of candidates with solid liberal credentials and political bases: Chris Beck, attorney David Bragdon, and longtime women's rights activist Laurie Wimmer. Duehmig lost by a huge margin in what became an extremely close three-way contest in which Beck ultimately emerged the winner.

Chuck Carpenter, a Republican incumbent seeking re-election to House District 7, won his race over challenger Chip Wallace, who was backed by the Oregon Citizens Alliance.

"[Dixon] ran a stellar campaign, and we were very disappointed with the returns," says Pack. "Frank was enthusiastic, he had a long and varied endorsement list. He did a great job, but I guess [Burdick] had higher name recognition. I hope he will run again in the future."

As for Duehmig, Pack says: "That was another disappointment. Bob worked hard, but he's a newcomer and the other three candidates were all well known. It definitely wasn't an easy race."



Gail Shibley



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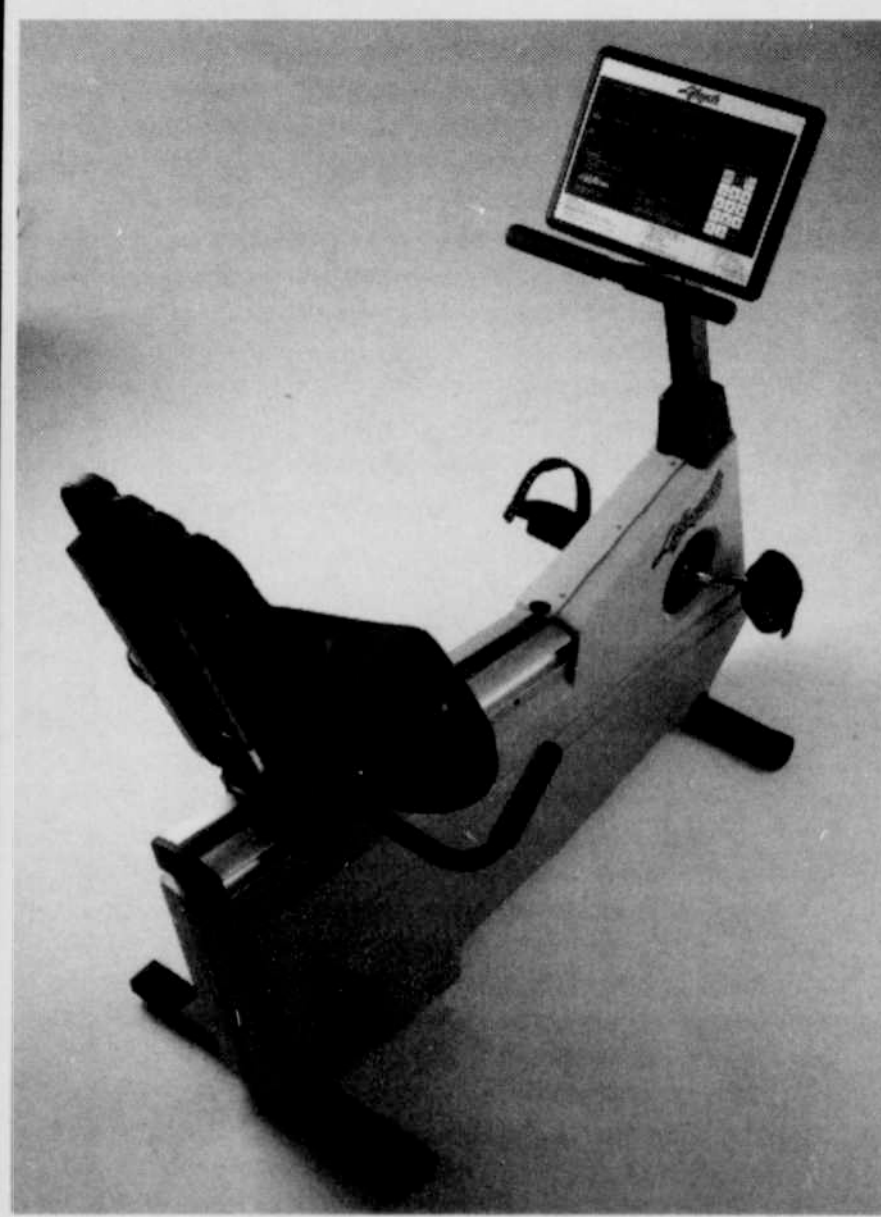


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