

Mayor Piercy

SHE BEAT THE DEVELOPER BUCKS; NOW WHAT?

BY ALAN PITTMAN

Kitty Piercy beat a half-million-dollar flood of developer cash and the opposition of the mainstream press to win re-election.

How'd she do it?

"Hard work," laughs Piercy, just recovering from a cold she slumped into after the ballot count showed her 2 percent victory over former mayor Jim Torrey.

Piercy's hard-fought victory could represent a pivotal moment in the long battle between developers and environmentalists over Eugene's future. Torrey would have likely rolled back progressive efforts to reduce urban sprawl and global warming, protect livability and the environment and increase city and police accountability.

After the big vote Nov. 4, Piercy talked to *EW* about her victory, what it means and the future.

Piercy credits her success to "all those hundreds of volunteers and all those thousands of people who supported me with contributions."

Piercy said she counted 2,500 supporters backing her campaign with time, endorsements and/or donations. "A lot of them gave over and over, small amounts."

Torrey reported raising \$528,000, largely in big contributions from developer, gravel pit and other special

interests. Piercy reported raising \$395,000, mostly from hundreds of smaller contributions.

About 85 percent of Torrey's money came from donors who gave more than \$1,000. In contrast, about three-fourths of Piercy's money came from donors who gave less than \$1,000. A third of her money came in donations of under \$100.

Piercy said "a strong campus effort" to get students to fill out the entire ballot and vote for her helped her effort, along with strong support from environmental, labor, education, human rights groups and the local Democratic Party.

After Torrey outspent Piercy 2-1 in the primary to force a run-off, Piercy said people rallied to help her win.

Piercy faced a setback when *The Register-Guard* changed its endorsement to Torrey without a clear explanation. After Piercy, former *R-G* columnist Don Bishoff and many others questioned whether the unusual change was due to pressure from development interests, the *R-G* shot back with an even more negative editorial attacking Piercy.

"They seem to be angry," Piercy said of the *R-G*. "I take their input, but they don't decide elections."

The run-off made for an almost year-long re-election battle. "It's been very long, and it's never given up for a minute," she said. "I'm very happy for it to be at an end."

Piercy said campaigning while serving as mayor was a challenge. "It's like two jobs," she said. And because of her position, Piercy said she wasn't as able to respond to attacks.

"I have to be the big person. I have to be the person who's above the fray," she said.

She said the 11 mayoral debates since the primary were trying, but "they helped me in the end."

The debates gave her a public chance to refute some of the accusations her opponent leveled at her, she said. "I had more opportunity to tell people the truth."

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