

No 30-year extension for county growth law Local voters say no to Measure J

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Amy Sharp reacts to favorable early return at "No on J" headquarters as her husband Dan (right) enters the vote totals onto a big screen projector for supporters to view. (Joel Rosenbaum/The Reporter)

Measure J went down to a sound defeat Tuesday night, as Solano County voters rejected guidelines that would have limited growth in the county's unincorporated areas for the next 30 years.

With all 233 precincts reporting, unofficial results showed there were 42,371 against Measure J, or 53 percent, and 38,066 votes, or 47 percent, for the measure.

"Save our Farms - No on Measure J" campaign manager Amber Johnson said opposition to the measure had resonated throughout the county.

The measure appeared to have support in the absentee ballot count. But when precinct tallies rolled in, the no votes took the lead and never lost hold.

More than 200 local farmers, businesses and community members and leaders who worked to defeat the measure



Solano County Supervisor Duane Kromm tallies up the results from Measure J at a gathering of "Yes on J" supporters in Green Valley Tuesday night. (Joel Rosenbaum/The Reporter)

celebrated amid signs and bales of hay at the group's Fairfield headquarters.

"We ran a really honest campaign," said farmer Derrick Lum. "We were successful because we've banded together."

Indeed, taking a political stand was a first for many local farmers, noted Johnson.

"It's something that hasn't happened in my lifetime in Solano County," said John Pierson, who runs Cherry Glen Beefmasters in Vacaville. "The farmers united."

The Orderly Growth Committee, which backed the measure, struggled to remain upbeat.

"Regardless of the outcome, the Orderly Growth Initiative has received the message that we need to reach out to people that feel like they need to be in the process," said Ernest Kimme, treasurer of the committee. "There has to be dialogue regardless of if we win or lose."

The committee and its core supporters, which include a variety of slow-growth and environmental advocacy organizations as well as some local farmers, attended a smaller gathering at a Green Valley home to monitor the returns.

"We worked so hard," said Solano County Supervisor Duane Kromm, who was among other Measure J proponents. "It's because we're passionate about the future of the county."

Measure J, which was one of the most controversial items on the ballot, would have extended for 30 years, with some modifications, the Orderly Growth Initiative of 1994, which was an extension of the 1984 voter-approved Proposition A.

It called for continued limitation of residential development density on land that falls into those categories.

The "No on J" group said they plan to continue their efforts to increase their representation in local government in order to help ensure the livelihood of their operations. The initiative would have hindered their ability to adapt as times change, farmers said.

"This initiative has brought us back to our roots," said lifelong Solano farmer Bob Hansen. "All we want to do is farm and we're going to have to change."

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