



Supporters say vote shows desire to keep viaduct

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Members of the group trying to save the 85-year-old 16th Street viaduct are hoping city leaders take note of how many voters were willing to fork over extra taxes in order to rebuild it.

Voters narrowly rejected a proposed bond issue of up to \$12.5 million to finance rebuilding the bridge in a special issue on Tuesday's general election ballot.

Unofficial results showed 5,200 people

(46.9%) voted against the bond issue. A total of 5,132 votes (46.2%) were cast in favor of the issue. There were 748 undervotes (nothing marked) and eight overvotes (both options marked).

Willis Hunt of Hastings, a former Hastings city engineer and city councilman, said the numbers are telling — especially due to the fact that a number of people who voted against the ballot issue were in favor of keeping the viaduct open,

though wishing to do so at a lower cost.

"It tells me that in spite of what the council said on Dec. 9, 2019, the people of Hastings need that viaduct," Hunt said. "Even though they (voters) were going to increase their taxes substantially, they were willing to do that."

Hunt said Hastings Citizens with a Voice encouraged people to vote against the \$12.5 million bond issue. The citizens' group objected to the ballot issue due to

the price tag and wants the city to repair the bridge, though two engineering firms say the deterioration is too significant to allow that.

Based on a forensic evaluation of the viaduct from Engineering Specialists Inc. of Omaha and the senior engineer at Olsson Associates concurring with ESI's analysis, the Hastings City Council voted to demolish the bridge at its Dec. 9, 2019, meeting.

Mayor Corey Stutte said the viaduct is well

past the end of its projected 50-year lifespan and it would be wasteful to try to pump money into a failing structure.

"For us to move forward, we need to consider the best use of taxpayer dollars," he said. "That's where the City Council was coming from."

While Stutte was surprised by the number of people who voted in favor of the project, he pointed out that 748 people chose not to vote in the issue at all, which likely indicates those

voters don't have a preference one way or another.

City leaders agreed to put the issue on the ballot after a group of citizens collected about 2,700 signatures to reverse the decision to raze the bridge. That group later formed a nonprofit organization named Hastings Citizens with a Voice.

Among the group was Alton Jackson of Hastings.

He said the city should

SEE VIADUCT/page A3



CAROLYN KASTER/AP

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden speaks Wednesday in Wilmington, Del.

On brink of White House

JOE BIDEN WON MICHIGAN AND WISCONSIN ON WEDNESDAY, RECLAIMING A KEY PART OF THE 'BLUE WALL' THAT SLIPPED AWAY FROM DEMOCRATS FOUR YEARS AGO

JONATHAN LEMIRE, ZEKE MILLER, JILL COLVIN AND ALEXANDRA JAFFE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Joe Biden won the battleground prizes of Michigan and Wisconsin on Wednesday, reclaiming a key part of the "blue wall" that slipped away from Democrats four years ago and dramatically narrowing President Donald Trump's pathway to reelection.

A full day after Election Day, neither candidate had cleared the 270 Electoral College votes needed to win the White House. But Biden's victories in the Great Lakes states left him at 264, meaning he was one battleground state away from crossing the threshold and becoming president-elect.

Biden, who has received more than 71 million votes, the most in history, was joined by his running mate Kamala Harris at an afternoon news conference and said he now expected to win the presidency, though he stopped short of outright declaring victory.

"I will govern as an American president," Biden said. "There will be no red states

and blue states when we win. Just the United States of America."

It was a stark contrast to Trump, who on Wednesday falsely proclaimed that he had won the election, even though millions of votes remained uncounted and the race was far from over.

The Associated Press called Wisconsin for Biden after election officials in the state said all outstanding ballots had been counted, save for a few hundred in one township and an expected small number of provisional votes.

Trump's campaign requested a recount, though statewide recounts in Wisconsin have historically changed the vote tally by only a few hundred votes. Biden led by 0.624 percentage point out of nearly 3.3 million ballots counted.

Since 2016, Democrats had been haunted by the crumbling of the blue wall, the trio of Great Lakes states — Pennsylvania is the third — that their candidates had been able to count on every four years. But Trump's populist appeal struck a chord with white working-class voters and he captured all three in 2016 by a total margin of just 77,000 votes.

Both candidates this year fiercely fought for the states, with Biden's everyman political persona resonating in blue-collar towns while his campaign also pushed to increase turnout among Black voters in cities like Detroit and Milwaukee.

Pennsylvania remained

too early to call Wednesday night.

It was unclear when or how quickly a national winner could be determined after a long, bitter campaign dominated by the coronavirus and its effects on Americans and the national economy. But Biden's possible pathways to the White House were expanding rapidly.

After the victories in Wisconsin and Michigan, he was just six Electoral College votes away from the presidency. A win in any undecided state except for Alaska — but including Nevada, with its six votes — would be enough to end Trump's tenure in the White House.

Trump spent much of Wednesday in the White House residence, huddling with advisers and fuming at media coverage showing his Democratic rival picking up key battlegrounds. Trump falsely claimed victory in several key states and amplified unsubstantiated conspiracy theories about Democratic gains as absentee and early votes were tabulated.

Trump campaign manager Bill Stepien said the president would formally request a Wisconsin recount, citing "irregularities" in several counties. And the campaign said it was filing suit in Michigan, Pennsylvania and Georgia to demand better access for campaign observers to locations where ballots are being processed and counted, and to raise absentee ballot concerns.

Thomsen: Voters made 'wise' decision in passing justice center bond issue

PROJECT ANTICIPATED TO TAKE 18 TO 24 MONTHS FOR COMPLETION

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Scott Thomsen, the member of the Adams County Board of Supervisors who worked most closely on the proposed justice center — bringing the project to voters for approval — was pleased with the outcome of Tuesday's general election vote.

According to unofficial results from the Adams County Clerk's Office, 6,911 people voted in favor of the bond issue and 6,448 people voted against it.

The planned 168-bed jail and justice center is anticipated to cost \$37 million, and must not exceed \$38 million according to the bond issue.

"I think the voters made a wise decision," Thomsen said. "I think this is much needed in the county. Like I've said before, I think it was the most important issue that was facing the county today."

The county board approved an agreement in March to purchase 11 acres south of M Street at U.S. Highway 281 for \$180,000 as a site for the justice center. The property will allow room to expand the facilities in the future if needed.

Many county departments that deal with law enforcement or court functions will have offices in the new justice center. Thomsen the county officials that run those departments are working hard to also minimize project costs.

Thomsen said the new justice center

SEE THOMSEN/page A3

COVID-19 risk needle steady this week

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The South Heartland Health District will remain at a 2.7 reading on its COVID-19 "risk dial" for a second consecutive week, the district health department reported Wednesday evening.

The reading is in the mid-to-high portion of the dial's orange zone, signifying "elevated" risk related to further spread of the novel coronavirus in the four-county district.

Several factors related to current conditions are used to establish the risk dial reading, which is updated each Wednesday. Zones on the dial include green (low risk), yellow (moderate), orange (elevated) and red (severe).

For the week of Oct. 25-31, the district saw a coronavirus test positivity rate of 11.6%. The rate is the number of positive virus test results the health department receives in a given

week as a percentage of all tests administered during that week. Positivity rates have exceeded 15% in recent weeks.

A positivity rate of 15% or higher indicates severe community spread of the virus, whereas a rate below 5% signifies low spread, according to the health department.

South Heartland's average number of daily new cases for the 14 days ending Oct. 31 was 63.1 per 100,000, said Michele Bever, health department executive director.

"If we had low community spread, we would expect an average of eight or fewer new cases per day per 100,000," Bever said.

As of Wednesday, 11 school systems in Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties were seeing student and staff

SEE COVID-19/page A3

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weather

75 TODAY Sunny. North-northwest wind 5-10 mph becoming east.
43 TONIGHT Mostly clear. Calm wind becoming south-southwest.

Details, page A5

Art by Isabella Smith

inside

Classified **B7** Markets **A3**
Comics **B5** Obituaries **A2**
Crossword **B8** Opinion **A4**
Entertainment **B6** Public notices **A5**

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