

## Davenport replacement re-elected

In Davenport, former mayor Darlene Bradley failed in her attempt to regain her former position. Incumbent H.B. Robinson III fended off Bradley's challenge, capturing 69.8% of the vote.

Bradley was elected mayor in 2013 and re-elected twice, but she resigned in December 2017 after being charged with fraudulently using handicapped placards of dead people to park in a space at City Hall.

Bradley pleaded no contest and served six months of probation and paid fines and court costs. As part of the agreement, prosecutors dismissed some charges.

Robinson, 80, was appointed to fill the remainder of Bradley's three-year term. He has been on the Davenport City Commission since 2007, except for a two-year absence after a lost election.

Robinson received 531 votes and Bradley 230.

"It's a great feeling," Robinson said Tuesday night. "I am so pleased that the voters in Davenport had enough sense to overlook the horrible things being said and the actions of the previous mayor. This is not my win; this is a Davenport win."

Meanwhile, Bradley's husband, John Lepley, also lost in his bid to join the City Commission. Incumbent Bobby Lynch drew 61.7% of the vote in the Seat 3 race. Lynch received 463 votes, while Lepley took 126 to finish third behind another challenger, Headley Oliver, who drew 161.

Lynch, 58, has served on the City Commission since 2002.

The presence of Bradley and Lepley on the ballot raised questions about potential conflicts with Florida's open-records laws, which forbid elected officials from discussing official business outside of public meetings. But City Attorney Andrew Hand cited a 1989 opinion from Robert Butterworth, then Florida's Attorney General, that the state's anti-nepotism law does not prohibit spouses from serving together on a town council.

“I think some voters could see that this could be a problem with the Sunshine Law when you have two people living in the same household, especially a husband and wife,” Lynch said. “I know the statute says this is OK, but I think people got to thinking about it and thought, ‘This is not right.’ ”

Davenport voters rejected an amendment to the city’s charter that would have directed the City Commission to elect the mayor annually. The measure also would have reclassified the mayor position as Commission Seat 5.

Voters disapproved the amendment by 577 to 172.

Of the 4,188 registered voters in Davenport, at least 761 cast a ballot, or 18.1%.

### **Lake Wales extends term lengths**

Incumbents Eugene Fultz and Curtis Gibson handily won re-election to their seats on the five-member Lake Wales City Commission. Fultz will serve another two-year term as mayor, and Gibson as city commissioner.

After the city’s voters approved a measure Tuesday extending commission terms from two years to three, Gibson, Fultz and Al Goldstein, who was unopposed, will be the last members of the Lake Wales City Commission to be elected to two-year terms.

Fultz, 69, a retired educator with the Polk County school system, took 995 votes, or 54.9% of the vote, to defeat challenger Bob Wood, 50, a retired military officer, and win a fourth term in office. Wood received 818 votes.

Gibson, 34, who works in maintenance at the Polk County School Board, received 1,110 votes, or 63.5% of the vote, in a race against challenger James Tucker, who drew 637 votes. Gibson will begin his second term on the five-member board when he and Fultz take their oath of office May 7.

Also taking the oath will be Goldstein, who automatically won his term when no one qualified in February to challenge him. He will replace Lake Wales lawyer Flora “Tonya” Stewart, who chose not to seek re-election after serving one term.