



# AHWATUKEE FOOTHILLS NEWS

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The little known but important other election is over.

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## Foothills Golf Course making big overhaul

BY PAUL MARYNIAK  
AFN Executive Editor

The Foothills Golf Course is closing for five months May 13 and when it re-opens for play around Oct. 18, General Manager Jeremy Strauss thinks duffers

will be amazed. Then again, what else can anyone expect from the world's largest golf management company and a family-run ownership enterprise that bought the 166-acre, 18-hole site with the intention of making it a place

where golfers and community members can gather? The course's renovation continues a steady renewal process that Troon Management – through Strauss and his team – began last year after it was hired by California-based owner

**Club West Course remains mired in court ..... See page 22**

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## Robinson calls his first year on council very busy

BY PAUL MARYNIAK  
AFN Executive Editor

One year ago this Friday, April 19, Kevin Robinson made some political history in Ahwatukee. Actually, that day he took his seat on the Phoenix City Council resonated across the city: As the newly elected Council District 6 representative, he was Ahwatukee's first new representative on the council since Sal DiCiccio was elected in 2009 and the first Black candidate elected to the council outside of District 8. And with the simultaneous swearing in of new District 8 Councilwoman Keisha Hodge Washington, that ceremony ushered in the first time Phoenix City Council has had more than one African American.

SEE ROBINSON PAGE 6

**Gala honoree**

Brandon Riggs had a lot to be excited about last December when the Ahwatukee Foothills News featured his courageous journey as an autistic student who refused to let schools treat him differently. The Ahwatukee resident and his father founded a nonprofit called My Special World that uses dance to promulgate a message of inclusivity on behalf of special needs students. Now Brandon, who also was featured in the Faces of Ahwatukee website that Realtors Judy Chasse and Mark Poisson run, has a new reason to celebrate. My Special World is the charity partner of this Friday's Light Up Ahwatukee Beer and Wine Gala. See the story on **page 34**. (Courtesy of Faces of Ahwatukee)

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# SRP's acre-based voting delays clean energy, advocate says

BY ANNELISE MAKIN  
AFN Contributor

It's a catch-22. The April 2 elections are over, some seats on the SRP (Salt River Project) utility board and council have changed, but one thing hasn't changed: 49% of SRP public utility rate-payers still lack voting rights.

"If you live in Queen Creek, San Tan Valley, Fountain Hills, Ahwatukee, East Gilbert, South Gilbert, North East Mesa, Eastmark, you can't vote," Randy Miller said. "Renters, alike, have no say in the rate plans or the renewable energy standards of SRP."

This disconnect exists because since 1937 SRP board votes are acre-based. Acres aside, the SRP voting process is complicated.

Miller, an SRP board member since 2018 who represents SRP District 6, urged some clean energy allies to run for this year's odd-numbered board seats.

One candidate was Lauren Kuby, a former Tempe City Council member who describes herself on Instagram as



SRP Board member Randy Miller and Lauren Kuby, a former Tempe City Council member and vice mayor who ran for the SRP Board unsuccessfully, reflect on the complicated nature of the utility's elections. (AnnElise MakinContributor)

a "consumer watchdog, Global Futures Scientist at ASU, climate leader, former Tempe council member, grandma and

dog mom." Kuby, a life-long activist, had won her council seat on a sustainability platform

and served from 2015-22, the last two years as vice-mayor.

Kuby got into the uphill run for an SRP board seat in District 5. She was used to knocking on doors and delivering a pitch. But nobody seemed to know that SRP board elections even existed.

"Yet I decided to run for the second most impactful office in people's daily life," Kuby said. The "most impactful office," a seat on the Arizona Corporation Commission, was lost to her and her running mate Sandra Kennedy in 2022.

Why is SRP so impactful? SRP, serving a 240,000-acre area in the Valley, is the largest public power/water utility in the United States by kWh produced. The SRP board sets the rates, decides on policies for energy sources, and approves all bonds for capital improvements. SRP is a self-governed entity and answers to no one, not even the ACC.

"There's a total of 84 elected officials in the SRP system. And the two high-

SEE SRP PAGE 28

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AUCTION & APPRAISAL



**SRP** FROM PAGE 27

est-paid elected officials in the state of Arizona are the SRP president and vice president," Miller said.

Kuby's race didn't go so well.

"I got shellacked by acres," she said. "We already started 550 steps back. My incumbent board opponent and three council members had over 550 acres amongst them."

In preliminary results, her District 5 opponent Stephen Williams scored 1,275.39 votes against Kuby's 255.08 votes. The decimals are not a part of a voter; they are a part of an acre.

"We increased the number of people that got early ballots by 153% just in this cycle," Kuby said. "And we still lost by a thousand acre-votes. So how do you process that?"

Kuby noted that the at-large candidates - elected with one person, one vote - won overwhelmingly in her district. They are Sandra Kennedy and Casey Clowes.

The low voter turnout didn't surprise Kuby or Miller; only 1-2% of constituents vote in the SRP board elections. The clean energy candidates illustrated this

fact as a funnel on their pamphlet.

SRP holds its nonpartisan board and council elections every other year for half its board seats. There are 14 "District" (electricity) board positions for 10 acre-based and four at-large districts. Elections alternate between odd and even numbered districts. Besides, there are 30 council positions to be filled. Add to that the Water Users Association (a private corporation) and replicate the procedure for an additional 10 board and 30 council seats.

SRP elections are not much publicized. Voters have to request a ballot online, be on the 1937 map, qualify by acreage, and then deal with the not so intuitive procedure and forms.

Kuby felt going in that the deck was stacked against her.

"I ran in a district that's heavily Democratic, Ruben Gallego's district in South Phoenix, and progressive in northwest Tempe, but in the far western part of the district, Laveen, high-acreage farmers captured all the seats."

Agricultural interests, by acreage-weight, dominate the council, she said.

That's also not justified for Randy

Miller, who argues, "SRP delivers 80% services to municipal use, only 20% to agriculture."

He was the first non-incumbent to win an acreage-based SRP board seat after his at-large service. Miller's passion for the advancement of clean energy was born of that same acreage-related catch.

Miller, a software engineer, moved to the Valley after college to work for Intel and Microsoft. He soon put solar panels on his roof in 2010. The SRP rebates, at the time, were generous, he said. Then, in 2015, came the unexpected rate hike for SRP solar customers.

"SRP told us that because you have solar panels on your house, we will charge you now 315% year after year," Miller said. This meant a monthly \$50 rate increase for most solar pioneers.

As the ACC could not step into action, Miller decided to run for the SRP board. He learned he couldn't do it: his property was not in the votable area.

That didn't stop Miller. He motivated two other people, Paul Hurt and Nick Brown, to run for SRP at-large board seats and they won. Next, Miller traded his home for another within the voting

boundaries and got elected.

He champions clean energy and says solar is the cheapest form of energy.

"Only 3.4% of SRP energy comes from solar, whereas many other providers reach at least 10%," Miller said, who created a website, SRPCleanEnergy.org.

Miller and Kuby are happy that the at-large candidates won. "Six out of eight is better than five out of nine," said Miller, whose supporters call "the PhD of SRP."

Acreage bias aside, the last election also brought out concrete suggestions.

"I can't tell you how many people at the door said, I had no idea this election was going on," Kuby said. "Ballots should be sent out automatically to all the 51% of ratepayers who can vote."

She also envisions an online district locator app as well as a directory to SRP representatives so that they will hear ratepayers' concerns.

"People also get confused with the blue and white ballots," Kuby noticed. "They may think it's a sample ballot, or fill out only one."

The white ballot is for the "district"

SEE **SRP** PAGE 29



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## SRP FROM PAGE 28

branch board; the blue one for the Water Users Association board seats.

Another barrier: SRP elections provide few drop-off locations and only one voting center.

"They should have at least one voting center per district," Kuby said. "And early drop off locations at the libraries."

However, the biggest voting barrier is, "about half a million of SRP rate payers can't vote at all. Of the 700,000 who can, only 15,000 request a ballot. Out of 1.2 million, only 7,000 individuals eventually vote," Miller said.

That doesn't faze Miller, who noted, "I actually quit my job, a full-time career, over this in 2021. Because it doesn't matter what kind of job I have. If I can't go outside and breathe the air and drink the water, then everything else is kind of secondary at that point. So, I just have to do everything I possibly can."

Next, Miller wants to get renters their voting right.

"The lowest hanging fruit is to take the people that are in the votable area today and allow renters to vote, right?"

Kuby found the SRP campaign wearying.

"I have two adult daughters and a granddaughter, who motivates me to do the things I do," she said. "And my husband, a retiring ASU professor, is very supportive of climate action. But running for office definitely puts a strain on relationships with your friends, with family, because it takes an extraordinary amount of time and dedication, especially when there are so many barriers."

"But there's a lot of joy in creating community around climate action and having run many other campaigns," Kuby said. "To me, the folks that are involved with SRP Clean Energy have the best of intentions. It's a larger cause than running for fame or fortune or glory, to be a board member or a council member."

Does Kuby envision another run? "Yes," she said. "I am exploring the options for 2026." Why, when it's two years away? Because it would take a whole lot more time "to explain this [SRP system] to a voter and how to go about voting." ■

## ABORTION FROM PAGE 25

not take effect until 90 days after the session is finally adjourned for the year, regardless of what day a bill is passed and signed by the governor.

The only exception is for measures that are declared an emergency. But that would require a two-thirds vote of both the House and Senate, a margin that does not appear to exist for repealing the

old law.

So if lawmakers stay in session into June, something they have done multiple times now, that would mean any repeal would not take effect until September. And if the final court order allowing enforcement comes in June, that could leave Arizona women with no legal right to an abortion other than to save the life of the mother for three months. ■

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