

The Votes Have Been Counted

by *Lynne Belluscio*

On Monday April 2, as we dedicated the new suffrage marker in front of the village hall, we offered the opportunity to all the folks, to use one of the old voting machines. I decided that in today's politically charged climate, that it would be best to avoid a controversial question. So what better ballot in the home of America's Most Famous Dessert than a vote that would decide everyone's favorite Jell-O flavor.

And the results are in. Raspberry won with 21 votes. Cherry - not even close at 14 and strawberry at 12. I told Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul, who joined us on Monday, that she and I would have to renew our efforts to bring strawberry back into first place. Mango and Island pineapple only garnered 1 each and watermelon had 2 votes. Lemon, grape and berry blue received three votes each. Orange captured 6 votes and lime had 7 devotees. On Monday at the Village Hall, during the dedication of the Women's Suffrage marker, seventy three

people cast votes for their favorite flavor of Jell-O on the old voting machines. I discovered that not everyone registered before they voted, but it was a little hectic in the village board room, which was packed, wall to wall. I don't think it was voter fraud, so we are counting all the votes. Dave and Barb Parton kept track of the voters and offered help if folks couldn't remember how to operate the old machines.

Last week, Bobby Lathan pulled out the two machines that lurked in the corner of the village board room. The last time they were used was in 2010, when New York State was forced to switch to the new computer scanning system. It was the last state to use the voting machines. I found out that the school had wanted to stay with the mechanical machines, and LeRoy was told that they would be fined if they continued to use the voting machines for any election. (We hope the government doesn't find out about our Jell-O vote!) I called Barb and Dave Parton to meet us at



the Village Hall. Duke Merica was able to meet us there with his box of tools. Duke and Dave "let" Bobby Lathan crank the machines up, which he discovered took a bit more elbow grease than he thought. Once the machines were up, then the various doors had to be opened. Sharon Jeary had the keys, thank goodness. The doors have to be opened in a special sequence. I had never seen the back opened up before, and Barb explained all the dials and how the numbers are read and recorded and how the numbers are turned back to zero at the next election. Duke got one of the machines working and the other one we discovered, had some stuck parts.

The machines at the village hall were made in Jamestown, NY by the Automatic Voting Machine Corporation. The company manufactured most of the voting machines used in the United States. Jacob Myers of Rochester had invented a mechanical voting machine in 1892 and it was used in 1896 in an election in Lockport. Eventually Myers and Alfred Gillespie established the Automatic Voting Machine Company in



Jamestown. The Smithsonian Institution has one of the Jamestown machines.

Many people said how much they missed these old machines. You knew that when you pulled the red lever, that the machine was ready for your vote. And when the lever was pulled back, the loud bell announced to everyone that another vote had been cast. If I could ever figure out a way to get one of these machines up into the Jell-O Gallery, it would be fun to have folks vote on it. Maybe some day . . .

A special thank you to everyone who helped make the day memorable.

