

ELECTION 2018

# Radio measure passing; Arlington school levy failing

Voters were supporting a countywide tax for emergency radios, rejecting an Arlington schools bond.

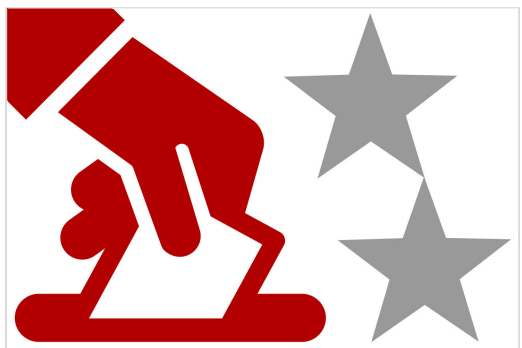
By Noah Haglund

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A solid majority of voters in Snohomish County were supporting an increase in sales tax to replace an outdated radio system for police, fire and EMS agencies.

Another pocketbook issue in the Arlington School District was failing, with voters narrowly rejecting a school bond for the second time this year.

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The countywide ballot measure for radios sought approval for a 0.1 percent increase in sales tax. The tax would add an 10 cents to a \$100 purchase.

“I’m excited and thankful,” said Brad Steiner, the executive director of SERS, the organization that operates the emergency radio system. “I’m an engineer. I like watching the numbers and the results so far are fantastic. The trust that people have — that we’re going to do this and do it right — we’re going to make them happy.”

SERS is short for the Snohomish County Emergency Radio System. It supports more than 40 public safety agencies.

Initial counts from Tuesday night showed the measure passing with 53.6 percent approval, according to the county auditor.

That number reflected more than 44 percent of ballots issued, with an expected turnout of more than 75 percent.

The upgrade would replace an analog system with a digital platform. That work would cost an estimated \$70 million. It would supply emergency personnel with thousands of new handheld radios and add four new radio towers to the 19 in use now.

The tax would take effect April 1. It would remain in place indefinitely for maintenance and operations.

The county's emergency radio system, which was installed in the early 2000s, experienced its first major malfunction early this year and several glitches since then. Motorola has said it will stop supporting the equipment after 2020.

In the Arlington area, [voters reconsidered a school bond](#) that failed in February. A slight majority of them — 51 percent — were rejecting the measure as of Tuesday night. Late-arriving ballots could change the outcome.

The \$107.5 million proposal would raise property tax in the Arlington School District to pay for a new Post Middle School and a major renovation of Arlington High School. New sports fields, safety improvements and planning for a new elementary school also figured into the package.

The district estimated the bond would cost about \$1.66 per \$1,000 of assessed value, or roughly \$500 on a \$300,000 home.

*Reporter Zachariah Bryan contributed to this story.*

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