

# Lomita voters oust mayor

**Results stun Waronek, who took fire for his ties to business interests.**

By Nick Green

Lomita voters overwhelmingly rejected the slick tactics of politically well-connected Mayor Mark Waronek on Tuesday, electing challenger Ken Blackwood and incumbent Don Suminaga to City Council seats.

Suminaga, who won a second council term, led the tally with 42.3 percent of the vote with absentee ballots and all four precincts counted.

Blackwood, who enjoyed name recognition with voters after serving a pair of previous council terms before stepping down two years ago, captured 36.3 percent of the vote.

Waronek received 21.4 percent.

To illustrate the swing in the vote, four years ago Suminaga received just two votes more than Waronek.

This time, despite spending what is estimated at more than twice what his two opponents spent combined, Waronek received about 300 fewer votes.

"I'm stunned," he said. "I thought I would win tonight. ... Unfortunately, the negative campaigning won out."

The result was widely seen as a repudiation of the leadership of Waronek, a first-term council member.

The lobbyist and consultant amassed an array of impressive endorsements from regional political players and sent out a series of expensive, glossy brochures that were unusual by Lomita standards.

Blackwood, backed by influential council veteran Margaret Estrada, had made an issue of Waronek's ties to businesses with interests in or near Lomita that posed the potential for conflicts of interest.

As the election neared, Waronek stepped down from his consulting job with the developer behind Ponte Vista, the massive San Pedro subdivision just beyond Lomita's borders.

"It's what I had hoped for," Blackwood said. "I'm very gratified the voters heard what we had to say."

The election was also seen as a battle for control of the council.

Estrada was often on the losing end of 4-1 votes and Suminaga said that will likely change now.

"We have an experienced five-member council and we should start the healing process," he said.

Waronek will hand over the largely ceremonial job of mayor at the next council meeting Nov. 19 - most likely to Estrada, who is next in line.

[nick.green@dailybreeze.com](mailto:nick.green@dailybreeze.com)