# The Community Aeus

Tuesday, August 11, 2020

## FOSTER WINS SUPERIOR COURT RACE

Walton attorney defeats Stansfield for Alcovy Circuit judgeship

By TAYLOR BECK

COVINGTON, Ga. — Jeffrey L. Foster is primed to take the place of Superior Court Judge Eugene Benton on the Alcovy Judicial Circuit in January after defeating Robert H. Stansfield in a narrowly contested race Tuesday.

Foster, a Walton County attorney, was elected judge after he won the nonpartisan Aug. 11 runoff election by a total count of 8,637-7,850, garnering more than 52%.

The Alcovy Judicial Circuit includes Newton and Walton counties. Newton County voters showed favor towards Stansfield, a Covington native, as he garnered 5,768 votes (64.82%). Foster dominated the polls in Walton County with 5,507 votes (72.57%).

Prior to the absentee vote count, Foster led Stansfield by more than 2,000 votes, but despite the sizable lead, neither candidate was ready to declare a winner.

After more than 8,000 absentee ballots were counted, Stansfield pulled 4,341 more votes, cutting the margin to fewer than 800 votes for a close finish. Only provisional ballots and military votes remain to be counted.

Foster said he was grat ful for the opportunity and appreciative of the voters'

confidence. "I am humbled by the

outpouring of support and the trust placed in me by the residents of the Alcovy Judicial Circuit," Foster said. "I love this place and will strive to leave it better than I found it, and will honor my promise."

Tuesday's outcome wasn't what Stansfield hoped for, but he was proud of his campaign and wished Foster

"I would have never imagined a judicial campaign marked by a pandemic, date



Alcovy Judicial Circuit Superior Court judge candidate Jeffrey Foster campaigns in Walton County hours before the polls closed for the Aug. 11 runoff election. Foster went on to defeat opponent Robert Stansfield. He will be sworn in as judge in January.

#### **Aug. 11 Runoff Election Results**



Jeffrey L.

**Alcovy Judicial Circuit Superior Court Judge** (Nonpartisan election)

Jeffrey Foster ...... 8,637 Robert Stansfield ...... 7,850 Total votes cast: 16,487



**Dorothy Piedrahita** 



**Johnson** 

Commissioners, District 5 (Democratic nominee)

Casey Duren ...... 368 Dorothy Piedrahita ...... 609 Total votes cast: 977

#### Newton County Schools Board of Education, District 4

(Democratic nominee) Anderson Bailey ...... 725 Jeffrey Johnson ...... 505 Total votes cast: 1,230

\*Election results may not include provisional votes



Robert H. **Stansfield** 



Casey Duren



Anderson **Bailey** 

changes, a runoff race and the death of a sitting judge," he said in a statement. "I am grateful for the support of all the people who helped my campaign with their time and treasure and those who voted for me. I am especially indebted to my wife and daughter for their encouragement and their work shoulder to shoulder with me over these many months. I also want to thank my law partner who bore a greater load at the law office and was a constant source of encouragement. I congratulate judge-elect Foster tonight on his election and hope that his tenure on the bench is marked with all the virtues that make a great trial judge."

Foster is a partner in the Foster, Hanks and Ballard law firm in Monroe and also serves as a Social Circle Municipal Court judge. He is a former associate Walton County Magistrate judge and Monroe Municipal Court

Foster is a graduate of the University of Delaware and earned his law degree from the University of Georgia School of Law. He worked as a law clerk for Superior Court Judge John Ott and as chief assistant district attorney for the Alcovy Judicial Circuit before opening his law firm in 2004.

His victory preserves the traditional split between the two counties that comprise the Alcovy Judicial Circuit. Traditionally the judgeships are split evenly between residents of the two counties, and when there have been an odd number of judges, the larger county — historically Newton — gets the extra judge.

There were three Newton County residents and two from Walton before the death of Judge Horace L. Johnson Jr. of Covington on July 1.

Gov. Brian Kemp will choose Johnson's successor. Foster will succeed Judge Eugene M. Benton of Monroe on Jan. 1.

David Clemons, editor and publisher of The Walton Tribune contributed to this

### Bailey, Piedrahita earn Democratic nominations

By TOM SPIGOLON

COVINGTON, Ga. — Anderson Bailey won the de facto election for Newton County School Board's District 4 seat Tuesday and will take a position left vacant since late 2019.

And Democratic voters in northeastern and central Newton County chose Dorothy Piedrahita to be the party's nominee for a Newton County Board of Commissioners seat in November.

Bailey received 59% of the vote to defeat Jeffrey Johnson, who received 41% of the vote.

He earned 725 votes and Johnson 505 votes, according to unofficial totals from the Newton County Elections and Registration office.

The Covington city employee will replace the late Almond Turner who died in November 2019. He will be unopposed in the Nov. 3 general election after no Republican qualified.

Bailey has been employed by the city for 14 years as a meter reader. He is retired from the military and also has been a GHSA multicounty basketball official for more than 25 years.

Johnson and Bailey qualified for Tuesday's runoff election after being the top two finishers in a three-person Democratic Primary race

Michael Syphoe. Any candidate must have received at least 50% plus

June 9 that also included

one vote to avoid a runoff.

District 4 stretches from Alcovy Road near I-20 in the north to South Salem Elementary School in the south and includes north central Covington and much of the city of Oxford.

Piedrahita received 62% of the vote to earn the Democratic nomination for the board of commissioners District 5 seat. She will face Republican incumbent Ronnie Cowan in the Nov. 3 general election.

She received 609 votes to Duren's 368 votes, according

to unofficial totals. They qualified for the runoff after she received 39% and Duren 31% — edging out third-place finisher Cecil

Spencer by 25 votes.

Piedrahita's occupation is listed as activist, according to candidate records.

District 5 stretches from Social Circle in the north to Mixon Elementary School in the south and includes northeast and central Newton County. A total of 8,948 Newton

County voters -11% of the county's almost 80,000 registered voters — cast ballots.

Officials said turnout was relatively heavy for a run-

off election, though it also featured a race for Superior Court judge. About 1,600 Newton County voters cast ballots early in-person during the

three-week advance voting

period before today's runoff

election — less than half the

3,400 who voted early before the June 9 election.

However, about 4,500 voted by absentee ballot following a trend begun in the June 9 election.

In that election, more than 13,000 used absentee ballots to cast their votes after the Georgia Secretary of State's office mailed applications in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring.

It was more than four times the average and led to election staff members being delayed in completing the final count because of the more time-consuming way state law requires absentee ballots to be counted, officials said.