

Runoff, recount or winner? Atlanta council race not settled

At first, the Atlanta City Council race between Courtney English and incumbent Michael Julian Bond was headed to a recount.

But late Thursday, the outcome was still unclear: Bond claimed victory while English dropped his recount request and contended instead that a runoff election is required.

An incredibly close race is to blame for the confusion.

Results indicate Bond received 49.97 percent of the vote and English 49.52 percent. There were 422 write-in votes, or 0.51 percent.

“Results certified by the board of elections in DeKalb County and Fulton County indicate that no candidate received a majority of the votes cast in the election, thus requiring a runoff election,” wrote attorney **David Dove**, on behalf of English, in a Thursday letter to election officials.

He asked that the recount be stopped.

Bond said the Atlanta election superintendent told him he had won. He said write-in votes don't count if they aren't cast for an eligible write-in candidate and there are no certified write-in candidates seeking the at-large council post 1.

“I believe this all stems from Fulton County. When they published the certified results they mistakenly included the write-in calculation and that should not have happened,” Bond said.

Richard Barron, the director of registration and elections in Fulton County, said when he first certified Fulton's results, he did not realize that neither of the two candidates had reached the 50 percent mark.

He certified the results with write-ins. But with only two people in the race, he said perhaps he should have left them out.

“My guess is, it's going to end up in court,” Barron said. “I've never had to worry about write-ins in a two-person race skewing results.”

Barron expected English to pursue a runoff but he wasn't yet sure if that's what would happen.

DeKalb County muddied the situation further when it released a statement Thursday indicating a runoff election was required. A couple of hours later, the county sent out a revised statement with that sentence deleted.

A DeKalb County spokesman could not be reached for comment.

English, the current Atlanta school board chairman, could not be reached for comment. His attorney declined to comment.

A recount will be held Friday in a College Park race. Joe Carn requested it after tallying 56 votes to Derrick Taylor's 58. Carn was first elected in 2006.