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## Surprise Winner in Mayoral Race

by Mathilda Gregory, Editor-in-Chief

Margo Truelove, owner of the Spun Sugar Candy Store and Chamber of Commerce Chairperson, pulled out a surprise victory on November 7th to become the next Mayor of Hardy Falls.

Despite trailing in the polls throughout the race, Ms. Truelove was able to come from behind and win, denying longtime Mayor, Barclay Ruffio, yet another two-year term.

“I think this shows that Hardy Falls is ready for a change,” said Ms. Truelove in her acceptance speech. “We can’t stay stuck in the past. As this area becomes more developed, we need strong leadership to position Hardy Falls for the future! I will do everything in my power to move us where we need to go!”

Ms. Truelove presumably feels that she is the best candidate for the job, but not all of her fellow Hardy Falls citizens agree.

“I’m not confident Margo understands that her role as mayor is a figurehead,” said Councilman David Newfield, who himself won another term in office in Tuesday’s elections. “The town council runs things. We don’t have a strong mayor in Hardy Falls.

Ms. Truelove did indeed seem a little surprised to hear there would be limitations on her role. “Well,” she said when informed she would have to work through the council, “they never gave me much trouble before. I can’t see that they will now.

Only time will tell. But the real question is how Mayor – soon to be ex-Mayor – Ruffio managed to lose a position he’s held for over 18 years.

“I thought he’d be there until he died,” said Wallace Dunlop, owner of Dunlop’s Garage. “He seemed to be a shoo-in.

“I had the votes,” insisted Mayor Ruffio. “The people of Hardy Falls know what I’ve done for them. But this was a low-turnout election, and there was a third candidate, so the electorate was fractured. I feel that it’s not so much that I lost the election as that it was stolen from me!

Mayor Ruffio is correct that the third candidate seems to be the key. According to voting commission records, a large number of votes went to a write-in candidate – Police Chief Jacqueline Kline. In fact, Chief Kline got a full 30% of the vote.

“But I wasn’t running!” Chief Kline said when we spoke. “I don’t want to be Mayor, for heaven’s sakes! I have absolutely no desire to be in politics; I’ve got enough to do with my own job. How the heck did I get that many votes?”

Good question We did some research by polling various citizens around Hardy Falls and discovered there was an underground movement to elect Chief Kline – whether she wanted to be elected or not

“It’s been a long time since Ruffio has done a good job, in my opinion,” said Joe Horton, owner of Horton’s Air Conditioning Service. “He’s too busy shooting the breeze with his friends to pay attention to what’s happening in the town. And I didn’t think Margo was a good candidate either.” So, Mr. Horton took it upon himself to write Chief Kline’s name on the ballot instead. Obviously, he wasn’t alone.

“We’d been talking about it at the Country Time and the diner, and a bunch of us thought it would be a good idea,” Mr. Horton said. “If Jackie won, we’d at least have someone in there we trusted.” He shrugged. “Word got around. A fair number of folks jumped on the bandwagon.

“That’s sweet of them, but if elected, I will not serve,” Chief Kline reiterated

Unfortunately, not everyone thinks Chief Kline was an innocent bystander.

“Jacqueline Kline cost me this election,” soon to be ex-mayor Ruffio claimed. “And I have to wonder what her objectives were. You can be sure that I’ll be watching her closely as I move into the private sector. I brought her in as police chief, but I won’t have her working to consolidate power!

Actually, it was the council who brought her in as police chief. Mayor Ruffio objected to the appointment.

“I feel that I won this election on my own merits,” Ms. Truelove asserted. “I would have won even if Jackie Kline wasn’t on the ballot. I’m ready to show Hardy Falls that they’ve elected the right person.

“On the ballot? I wasn’t on the ballot!” Chief Kline exclaimed. “I wasn’t running! How many times do I have to say it?”

“I wish Jackie had won,” was Martin Scanner’s opinion when we talked to him and Mr. Horton at the Country Time. “Oh, well. There’s always the next election.

Apparently, Chief Kline will have to say it a few more times.