

Early voting turnout shatters expectations

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Single-day turnout records were broken Monday as the county began 13 days of early voting.

Elections Supervisor Charles Overturf III said early voting has not been around for many years, but Interlachen, Crescent City and Palatka saw the most ballots cast in one day of early voting in county history.

"It was, by far, the best day we ever had," Overturf said.

He said Interlachen Community Center, 135 S. County Road 315, had between 650 and 700 ballots cast Monday.

The South Putnam County Government Complex, 115 N. Summit St. in Crescent City, usually had a high of 330 cast in a day but more than 370 were cast Monday, Overturf estimated.

The Supervisor of Elections Office, 2509 Crill Ave. in Palatka, had 1,200 voters Monday when previous years had a high of about 950 voters in one day.

By 6 p.m. Tuesday, voter turnout hit 20.45%. The Supervisor of Elections website showed 6,200 residents voted by mail, 4,163 cast early votes and six provisional ballots had been cast.

Overturf said he thought this year's presidential election drew increased public interest. Although Tuesday's lines in Palatka were not around the government complex like Monday, he said the turnout continued to be good.

"I said 75% (voter turnout) for the whole election, if not, maybe a little bit more," Overturf said. "I think we're on par to get to that total. If not more if we keep going the way we're doing."

The elections supervisor said the long lines moved quickly because many people brought their sample ballots to speed along the process. Overturf recommended filling out a sample ballot ahead of time because this year's ballot is the longest one Putnam County has had. Residents can bring sample ballots with them and copy their choices to the actual ballot.

Social distancing is also being observed with voting lines and the Supervisor of Elections Office has coronavirus safety precautions in place for voters at all early voting locations.

Disposable cotton swabs are used for voters to sign their names, frequent sanitization is conducted and Plexiglas barriers are used between election workers and voters.

Masks are not required but are encouraged when voting. Residents will not be turned away if they choose not to wear a mask.

Early voting continues 8:30 a.m.– 6 p.m. through Oct. 31 and Election Day on Nov. 3. Putnam voters can vote at any of the early voting locations, but they must vote at their assigned polling place on Election Day.

For residents who want to vote by mail, Overturf recommended Saturday be the last day they request a mail ballot to ensure it gets to voters and back to the Elections Office by Election Day.

“We’re moving (voters) in and out really well and trying to keep them healthy and safe,” he said.  
“.... We’re doing everything we can to give them a good experience letting them vote but also being healthy and safe about it.”

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