

HISTORIC ELECTIONS: PETRA SCHLÄPPI BECOMES FIRST FEMALE PRESIDENT



Photograph: Jocelyne Page

LOCAL NEWS

For the first time in its history, Saanen has elected a female municipal president, marking a pivotal moment for the region. Petra Schläppi, representing the Swiss People's Party (SVP), secured a decisive win with 980 votes, outpacing her competitors David Schmid (FDP) with 704 votes and Martin Göppert (independent) with 139. Voter turnout was approximately 50%, with 1,942 residents casting their ballots.

Schläppi expressed her surprise and joy at the results during the announcement. "I expected a second round since we had three candidates, and achieving an absolute majority plus one vote is challenging," she noted. Schläppi is enthusiastic about the diverse age composition of the newly elected council, calling it a strong foundation for the upcoming term.

Her victory adds to a unique regional trend: all three municipalities in Saanenland are now led by women. "While I don't focus explicitly on women's politics, this development undoubtedly brings a positive dynamic to the area," Schläppi remarked.

A Symbolic Gesture

While presenting the vote result, Martin Göppert humorously gifted Schläppi a decorated pitchfork. The gesture referred to her comment during a previous debate about

pushing back against Bern's financial policies. Göppert congratulated Schläppi on her victory, joking, "You achieved it in the first round, saving the municipality tens of thousands of francs."

David Schmid, Schläppi's main contender, also praised her win, describing the campaign as fair and professional. "It was a clear result, and I am genuinely happy for Petra," he said, emphasizing the FDP's overall success in retaining influence in the municipal council.

Council Composition and Changes

The nine-member council for the 2025–2029 term sees a shift in party dynamics. The FDP gained a seat at the expense of the SVP, resulting in a new composition: five seats for the SVP, three for the FDP, and one for the Green Liberal Party (GLP).

Five incumbent members retained their seats: Nathanael Perreten (SVP), David Schmid (FDP), Klaus Romang (SVP), Martin Hefti (SVP), and Patricia Matti (SVP). Notably, Thomas Frei (FDP) was not re-elected but expressed no disappointment, celebrating the election of young newcomer Elio von Grünigen (FDP).

Three new faces joined the council: Philippe Marmet (GLP), Sigbert Feller (FDP), and Elio von Grünigen, an architect born in 1998. Von Grünigen shared his excitement,

highlighting his readiness to bring youthful curiosity and fresh perspectives to the council.

Leadership of the Assembly

Hans Schär (FDP) was elected president of the municipal assembly with 1,124 votes, defeating Emanuel Raaflaub-Kohli (SVP). Christian Gafner (FDP) was confirmed as vice president without opposition.

A Call to Value Democracy

This election represents both progress and challenges for the region. While the results indicate strong public trust in the council's direction, the 50% voter turnout raises concerns. As Anzeiger von Saanen's editor Jocelyne Page notes, "Half the eligible voters didn't take ten minutes to mark their ballots, despite the ease of the process."

Page emphasized the importance of cherishing and participating in democratic processes, particularly at the local level. "Democracy is increasingly rare and precious in today's world. It is the foundation for a strong, self-determined society even at the municipal level."

With a blend of continuity and new leadership, the newly elected council must navigate change while preserving Saanen's cherished traditions and values.

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