

CHRISTMAN AND HUTCHISON POISED FOR RE-ELECTION; PETRUNOFF AND DUGAN BATTLE FOR FINAL SPOT

A poll of the five-way Feb. 1, 2022 race for Naples City Council reveals that incumbents Ray Christman and Terry Hutchison are both likely to win re-election. Newcomers Beth Petrunoff and John Dugan are both within reach of the third spot on the council, while the fifth candidate, Ian Rudnick, lags behind.

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Important Background Information

Although nearly 200,000 registered voters have a Naples address, the City of Naples is only a small subset of the Greater Naples area. Its 16,000 voters reside in a generally affluent and conservative area along the coast, south of Pine Ridge Road and north of Gordon Pass. Because of its small size, the City of Naples is notoriously difficult to poll. However, with persistence and scrupulous in-house weighting software, we've garnered enough results to draw confident conclusions. However, exact point estimates should be taken with a grain of salt, as smaller sample sizes yield wider margins of error. Thus, in this report, we'll be focusing on the broader trends we uncovered, only providing point estimates when appropriate.

In this five-way general election, only three candidates will win seats on the City Council. Ray Christman and Terry Hutchison currently occupy two of these seats and are running for re-election, while the third seat, currently occupied by Gary Price, is being vacated. John Dugan, Beth Petrunoff, and Ian Rudnick have joined Christman and Hutchison in the race. Of all the newcomers, Dugan has been most aggressive about sharing his conservative and pro-Trump viewpoints, which, as we'll investigate, has its pros and cons.

Candidate Rankings

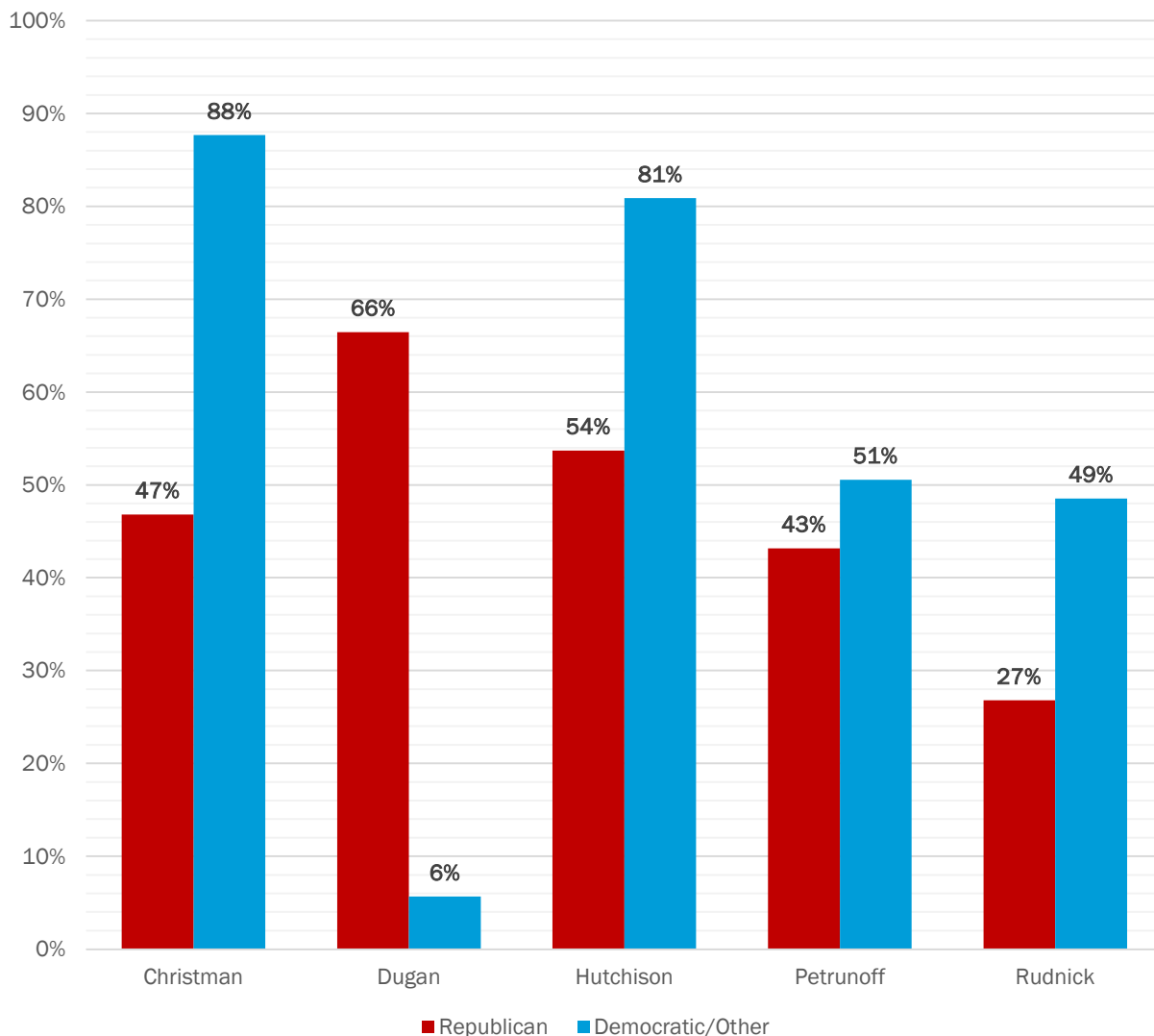
Instead of simply asking respondents which three candidates they plan on voting for, we asked them to rank their top three choices. This allowed us to uncover some interesting trends. For example, Dugan was the most popular first choice, and the least popular third choice. This suggests that his aggressive strategy has won him some very strong supporters, but has detracted from his general popularity. On the contrary, Christman is not the #1 first choice, second choice, or third choice, but he consistently ranks in the top 3 – the only candidate to achieve such a feat. In that same vein, Hutchison is the least popular first choice, but ranks in the top 2 for second and third choices. As we'll see later, despite Hutchison and Christman being less popular first choices than Dugan, they outperform Dugan significantly in the overall results.

	1st Choice Ranking	2nd Choice Ranking	3rd Choice Ranking
Christman	2	2	3
Dugan	1	3	5
Hutchison	5	1	2
Petrunoff	3	5	1
Rudnick	4	4	4



Partisan Support

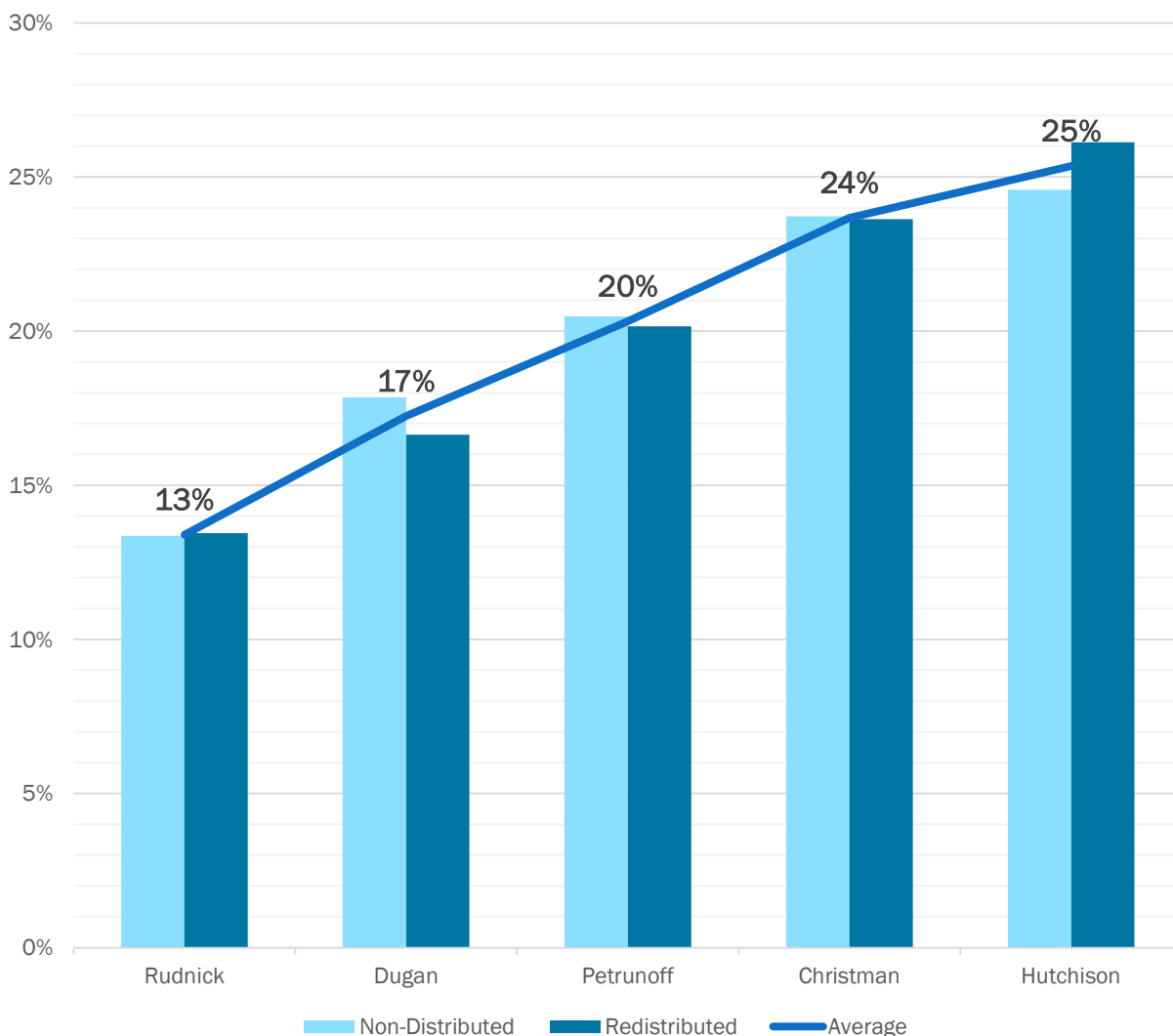
The below chart shows what percentage of voters from each party used one of their three choices to vote for each candidate. Since Republicans make up about two-thirds of the Naples electorate, Democrats and other non-Republican voters are all grouped together for easier comparison and less variance. Only 6% of non-Republican voters used one of their three votes to vote for Dugan – a consequence of his aggressive Republican rhetoric. Every candidate besides Dugan had higher support among non-Republicans than they did among Republicans, largely due to the fact that non-Republicans were simply avoiding voting for Dugan, which pushed them towards the other four candidates. Incumbents Christman (88%) and Hutchison (81%) perform best among non-Republicans, likely due to their high Name ID and general popularity. Among Republicans, Dugan (66%) performs best, trailed by Hutchison, Christman, Petrunoff, and Rudnick, in that order.





Combined Ballot

Next, let's delve into the overall results of our polling. We calculated each candidate's final percentage in two ways, the full explanation for which is quite complex. In short, however, the "Non-Distributed" percentage details what would happen if fervent supporters for one candidate vote for fewer than three candidates, only voting for those they strongly support. The "Redistributed" percentage details what would happen if fervent supporters for one candidate select three candidates nonetheless. Of course, the reality is somewhere between these two extremes, so we used the average of these two values to compute each candidate's expected percentage. As Dugan has the most fervent supporters, he experiences the greatest drop-off between Non-Distributed and Redistributed computation techniques, whereas Hutchison experiences the greatest increase, due to his general popularity. The averaged (i.e. final) results are discussed more comprehensively in the *Conclusions* section on page six.





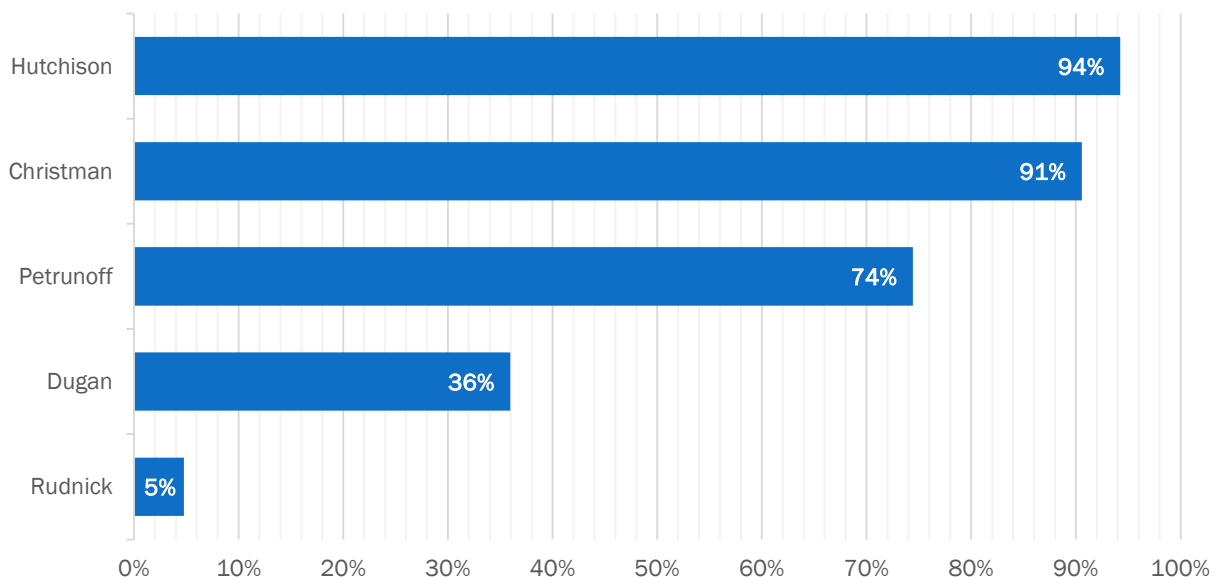
10KSim: Simulated Election Outcomes

At Victory Insights, we've developed 10KSim, which is software that simulates an election 10,000 times and reports the outcome of these simulations. Below is a table that displays the likelihood of each candidate to finish in any particular position. For example, in 0% (more specifically, 0.0004%) of the simulations, Rudnick came in first place, but in 75% of simulations, he came in last. Conversely, in 88% of simulations, either Hutchison or Christman came in first place. This information is incredibly useful when evaluating each candidate's chances of finishing in the top three, as we'll do in the next section.

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Rudnick	0%	1%	4%	20%	75%
Dugan	2%	9%	26%	47%	17%
Petrunoff	10%	25%	39%	20%	6%
Christman	35%	37%	19%	8%	2%
Hutchison	53%	28%	13%	5%	1%

10KSim: Likelihood of Finishing in the Top Three

At the end of the day, the primary purpose of our polling was to determine how likely it was that each candidate would finish in the top three and become a member of the Naples City Council. That's exactly what the chart below shows. Hutchison and Christman each have a >90% chance of finishing in the top three, followed by Petrunoff with 74%, Dugan with 36%, and Rudnick with 5%.





Conclusions

Overall, Christman and Hutchison are in the strongest positions ahead of Election Day on February 1st. Both are estimated to finish with about a quarter of the total vote share, both have a 90%+ chance of finishing in the top three, and both enjoy reasonably high support across party lines. While these two incumbents seem to be the clear frontrunners, things aren't quite as simple when determining who's most likely to claim the final spot in the top three.

Between newcomers Dugan, Petrunoff, and Rudnick, it's clear that Rudnick is the least likely to make it into the final spot. He posts the weakest numbers, both overall and among Republicans. Among non-Republicans, he only outperforms uber-conservative Dugan. Simulations of the race give him only a 5% of finishing in the top three.

The question remains: Will Dugan or Petrunoff claim the final City Council seat? The answer to this question depends on a number of factors. Simulations give Petrunoff a 74% chance of finishing in the top three, compared to only 36% for Dugan. On a related note, Petrunoff is predicted to finish with more votes than Dugan, but only by approximately 3%. In a poll like this one with a limited sample size, a 3% difference between candidates is certainly within the margin of error. In addition, Dugan's vote share could jump considerably if he's able to get non-traditional municipal voters out to the polls. In other words, if he's running a Trump-esque campaign, he needs general Trump-supporting voters to get out and vote.

Nevertheless, we can't forget that this race is not yet over, and thus the election has not yet been decided. In the final two weeks of their respective campaigns, candidates may launch last-minute outreach, alter their strategies, or connect with new voters. Until then, this data is our clearest window into voters' minds.



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