Why IRV?

In Understanding IRV I tried to explain the details of the specific IRV procedures being proposed for Aspen. There are several key properties that proponents of IRV point to as to why it should be used.

1) Saves the cost of having a runoff.
   or
2) Prevents candidates from being "spoilers" (ex. Nader in 2000).
   a. Leads to less negative campaigning.

The first reason is clear. The second factor comes from the result of ranking votes and requiring a majority (50+%). By requiring a majority of votes and using ranked voting it allows people to vote for an unlikely winner and still get to express a preference between the top two candidates. An example here would be a three person race between Democratic, Republican, and Green Party candidates. If 40% of the voters are vote for the Republican, 35% vote for the Democrat and 25% vote for the Green,then the Republican would win in an election where a majority is not required. However in a runoff system everyone goes back to choose between the Republican and Democrat and when faced with only those two choices voters may choose the Democrat 55/45 over the Republican. People often complain about having runoff elections because turnout may be lower and the expense to the tax payer is higher. However the benefit of eliminating spoilers is the same in both traditional runoff systems and IRV.

Why IRV in Aspen?

Since Aspen already had a runoff system that prevented the "spoiler" problem, the only reason to implement IRV is to reduce the cost and hassle of an additional election. Not being a citizen of Aspen I don't know how the IRV was presented when it was on the ballot but I would assume that since Aspen already utilized a runoff system that most voters felt that instant *runoff voting* would yield the same results as Aspens traditional runoff system. Unless it was specified otherwise, people voting for IRV in Aspen should be understood to be voting for an *instant* version of Aspen's runoff.

IRV taskforce and FairVote Proposals for Aspen?

If you are uncertain about the different proposals you can read Understanding IRV (http://theredant.squarespace.com/storage/Understanding%20IRV2.14.09R.pdf) to get the full description to each proposal. The quick reference is that the taskforce proposal is basically Aspen's traditional runoff system conducted with ranked ballots. The first FairVote proposal is iterated sequential runoff. The second FairVote proposal is a hybrid of the two.

Some supporters of the FairVote proposals claim Aspen voted for IRV and therefore needs a "true" IRV election system. I have no idea what they mean by a "true" IRV system, particularly for an election with two seats and a majority requirement. Since at the time of the vote there were no IRV systems in America for a two seat, two vote, majority required election it is reasonable to assume people were voting for an IRV system that would work in the same was as their current system. The only advantages I could find of IRV, as stated by IRV proponents, are the two above: to prevents spoilers and save the

cost of a runoff. So I have no idea what criteria is being used to claim that the taskforce proposal isn't a "true" IRV system. The taskforce proposal satisfies the criterion for IRV as put forth by IRV proponents, in that it eliminates spoilers and saves the money of a traditional runoff. If there was some other information given to the voters of Aspen when they voted for IRV, I'm not aware of it.

The first FairVote proposal which is now presented to the public as Alternative Two has the consequence of giving a significant percentage of voters only a single preference in the election. **Everyone who votes for the candidate who comes in second for the first City Council seat will most likely not have their second preference count.** This is a flaw that will occur almost every election to a significant percentage of voters (I would guess anywhere from 15%-30%). Other voters, particularly those who voted for the candidate who wins the first seat, will have their first and second preferences fully considered. This discrepancy is fundamentally opposed to the democratic ideal of one person, one vote.

The second FairVote proposal (now being called the "compromise" method) fails to accomplish one of the stated goals of IRV,-- to prevent spoilers. This method assures one of the seats will go to one of top two ranked candidates after the first round of voting. This system fails to prevent spoilers therefore undermining the whole philosophical argument in support of IRV. This system also has a similar problem as the first FairVote proposal after the first seat is filled the voters for that candidate receive a greater degree of influence in determining the second seat. FairVote's second proposal fails to achieve the primary reason for using a runoff system without fully eliminating the flaws in their first proposal.

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Feel free to post your questions at www.TheRedAnt.com on the mathematical implications of the various methods, and I will attempt to answer as time permits.