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Wal-Mart has impact in Hartford

By PHILLIP HERMANN - GM Today Staff

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HARTFORD - Political newcomer David Ziemer easily defeated Justin Graef for the third aldermanic district seat on the Hartford Common Council that will be vacated by incumbent Chuck Shortt, who chose not to run for re-election.

Ziemer, 47, is an experimental mechanic employed by Harley-Davidson Corp. He also co-owns Curious Worlds with his wife, Gwen, in downtown Hartford.

During the campaign, Ziemer ran on a strong pledge that he would make representing the residents of his district a top priority rather than voting based on his personal beliefs. Graef, 30, owns Fox's Pizza Den on Sumner Street and also was making his first try for political office.

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Ziemer received 190 votes to Graef's 84.

"I think the people are hungry for representation on the council," Ziemer said following his victory. "I'd like to thank my campaign workers and supporters for doing a great job."

Ziemer, who also spoke at a public hearing against the recent annexation and rezoning for the new Wal-Mart store in Hartford, said that one big issue may or may not have been what pushed him over the top.

"It's really hard to say if it was just one thing," Ziemer said. "But maybe this sends a message that a lot of people weren't exactly happy with the way that thing all went down."

Things didn't fair as well for another anti-Wal-Mart candidate, Marilyn Raschka, who jumped into the second aldermanic district race to challenge incumbent Jim Core as a write-in candidate.

Core received 269 votes to Raschka's 135.

Raschka said previously that she wanted to challenge Core to send a message about her feeling that the council didn't listen to residents' wishes on the Wal-Mart approval.

Core was one of seven alderpersons who voted to approve the project's annexation, rezoning and developer's agreement.

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