

Guilderland GOP ponders Democrat's win

By TOM FRIEDMAN
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In the wake of the first Democratic victory in Guilderland town politics Tuesday, Republican leaders were attempting to assess reasons for it and consider what it may mean.

They generally agreed the town's large number of apartment dwellers contributed to Virginia Horan's defeat of incumbent Pauline Porter for a town board seat.

They pointed out that the Democrats convinced apartment dwellers that the building of the \$85 million Crossgates shopping mall, proposed for the town's Pine Bush section, would make Guilderland an undesirable place to live.

The GOP leaders believe the apartment dwellers are outsiders "without much allegiance" to Guilderland, and, consequently, were a captive audience for the Democrats' sharp criticism of the mall.

The future of town politics is vague, they said, because the Democrats failed to win more than one seat on the five-member town board.

They declined to speculate about the future of the Crossgates mall. It appears that Horan's pledge to stop building of the mall through rezoning might not have much weight because three

town board members are mall proponents.

Republicans, from committeemen to candidates, Wednesday were showing concern over the strongest showing by Democrats in an election in the town's 100-year history.

Unofficial returns show Republican incumbent Carl Walters, who was first elected 14 years ago, narrowly defeated Democratic challenger Donald Berger, 5,013 to 4,406, while the difference between first and last place in the town board race was 300 votes. Horan defeated Porter by less than 300 votes, 4,757-4,486 and Republican newcomer John Smircich defeated Democrat Pearl Kurland by 120 votes, 4,539-4,418.

"I'm no expert but I'd say that more than anything else votes from the districts with apartment complexes were responsible for the outcome," Walters said.

"These people don't have an allegiance to the town, and I feel they were stirred up by half-truths and other things about the Crossgates issue that were taken out of context," he added. During the campaign, Democrats accused Republicans of not considering the residents' demonstrated opposition to the project.

Walters said he had idea what Horan's presence on the town board will mean. "She'll be a board member

on Jan. 1, and she'll certainly have every right to exercise her wishes."

Horan and other Democrats said during the campaign that they would rezone the mall's 170-acre site to non-commercial if elected.

Republican Town Chairman Matthew H. Mataraso agreed with Walters on these points. "I think the make-up of the town has changed considerably and we didn't realize how much," he said.

Mataraso pointed out that in 1975, Town Board member Roy McNiven squeezed by his Democratic opponent by 25 votes.

"Many of these people in the apartment complexes are Democrats and voted on a party line," he said. Others

who haven't voted in the past did so this time after they were "captivated by the Crossgates issue," Mataraso said.

He believes he miscalculated the importance of the issue in the town campaigns.

In the future, he said, he will "sharpen things during the campaign" and "select candidates more carefully."

With Horan now in town government, Mataraso said he expects to see some influences of the Albany Democratic "machine" run by Albany Mayor Erastus Corning II for the first time. Otherwise, he said, the four Republicans will maintain control of the town.

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bank robbery