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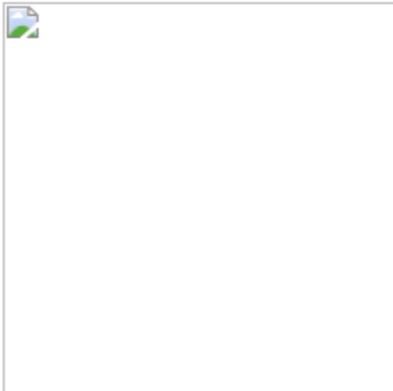
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Democrat Kirson voted new Hightstown mayor

Wednesday, November 03, 2010

Vic Monaco

STAFF WRITER

HIGHTSTOWN -- Democrat Steve Kirson, a retired financial executive, will be sworn in as the new mayor of the borough in January after defeating outspoken Republican Rob Thibault, based on unofficial election results yesterday.

The unfinished tally gave Kirson 728 votes to Thibault's 521. Kirson will succeed Republican Bob Patten, who has served two, four-year terms.



Kirson said last night that he believes his election along with the ouster of incumbent Democratic Councilmen Walter Sikorski and Jeff Bond was a clear signal that residents are upset with the way the council and Mayor Patten handled the recently extinguished talks to have East Windsor take over borough law enforcement.

"I am greatly surprised and happy at how involved our community is in what goes on," he said. "I hope the people of East Windsor understand that residents of Hightstown were disappointed in how the negotiations ended. Rough residents want council to know they're going to be held accountable."

Sikorski and Bond were two members of a borough committee that last month claimed they had reached an impasse with East Windsor after about two years of talks, a claim township officials dispute.

A consultant concluded that the takeover could save the borough about \$800,000 a year.

Kirson -- who ran unsuccessfully for council as a write-in candidate in 2008 and lost the 2009 primary -- said he has no problem seeing two fellow Democrats unseated.

"Party means nothing here. We're at the financial survival level here," he said.

The local Democratic Party usually gathers on election night but that was not the case this year, especially after Thibault backed the Democratic council candidates because of their apparent support for municipal consolidation.

Kirson said Monday, "There's no reason for me to hang out with people who are dysfunctional."

Kirson, 61, said he would use his financial background to cut costs.

"The first thing in January, I'm going to be reviewing all shared services agreement to make sure we're getting the best deals," he said.

In addition, he said, "Hopefully, I can help repair the relationship with East Windsor."

Thibault, 53, who works in corporate communications at Dow Jones, said he was disappointed but not surprised at the outcome.

"I considered myself a long shot as the underdog because the town is overwhelmingly Democratic, I think three-to-one."

He applauded Kirson for running a hard, clean campaign.

"Our views on the issues are very similar. I think he's going to bring a level of professionalism that certainly has been lacking in the borough," he said.

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