



The Republican.

Failed plan got better backing

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AGAWAM - With spending topping \$90,000, the national developer behind the failed Agawam Pavilion retail project outspent the major opposition to their project by nearly seven times, according to campaign finance reports filed with the city.

The reports, a mandated document that is filed with the City Clerk's office, show National Realty & Development Corp. spending a total of \$90,833.14 in a campaign that included organized polling, tens of thousands of dollars in advertising, and numerous mass mailings.

The chief opponent of the project, Agawam Citizens Against Reckless Development, spent a total of \$13,556.36, the reports said, with much of that money cobbled together with small donations and fund-raisers.

Karl A. Merriam, CARD president, said the totals show that big money does not always equal victory in elections.

"I think it shows that a passionate group who educate people can beat big money, when it comes down to it," he said.

Mark H. Robbins, project manager for the Pavilion project, did not return calls seeking comment.

The project, a 563,000 square-foot shopping center eyed for 94 acres of land off Route 57 at Tennis Road and Mill Street, would have included at least eight major box stores had it been approved, with Target and Lowe's as the likely anchor stores.

The fate of the development was put to voters in the form of two binding ballot initiative questions pushed by Citizens in Favor of Retail, a group of residents in favor of the project. With voters turning out in droves for and against the project, the questions were both defeated by 3-to-2 margins.

Fay A. Borgatti, chairwoman for the group, said yesterday she remains disappointed with the votes, but is proud that they were able to get the questions on the ballot.

"We tried very hard to combat the misconceptions that were put out there about the project, and, unfortunately, we weren't very successful," she said, of her group, which reported campaign spending of less than \$400.

Campaign finance reports showed that few candidates in any of the city's election day races spent big money, with only Mayor Richard A. Cohen (\$2,396.11) and failed City Council candidate Maryann E. Paleologopoulos (\$3,119.62) spending more than \$1,000.

Cohen and every other city official seeking re-election were voted back into office, while Paleogopoulos finished 12th in a race for the 11-person City Council.

City Clerk Richard M. Theroux said yesterday he had yet to receive the campaign finance report of one

candidate, failed Council hopeful Michael J. DeFilippi.

"I'm going to give him one more opportunity to get it in, but then I will need to turn his name over to the state," Theroux said.

If the report is not turned in, DeFilippi could be held liable for a \$10-per-day fine dating back to the report's due date, Dec. 8.

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