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Balestracci Re-Elected, Besting GOP Challenge

by David Funkhouser, Courant Staff Writer

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GUILFORD First Selectman Carl Balestracci whipped Republican challenger Ken Wilson Tuesday by a margin of roughly 500 votes as Democrats won a resounding victory across the board.

"I'm absolutely elated," Balestracci said outside Democratic headquarters at the Guilford Plaza as his colleagues celebrated inside. "This is such a great team victory for the Democrats."

About 6,200 out of nearly 15,000 registered voters took part.

Wilson, who ran a vigorous campaign with his fellow GOP candidates as "Team Wilson," did not win enough votes to even sit on the board of selectmen.

Democratic selectmen Veronica Wallace and Sal Catardi held onto their seats, along with Republican incumbent Joseph Mazza. Republican Cynthia Cartier also won a seat and will give up her school board post as a result.

"I'm OK," said Wilson, 55, who tried to sound upbeat amid a subdued crowd at party headquarters on Route 1. "This is what the voters want and what they'll get for the next two years."

This was Wilson's first try for elective office.

Balestracci, 67, a former school teacher and administrator, was first elected to the office in 2001. He lost to Gene Bishop in 2003 and won the job back in 2005 by 77 votes.

He said this vote reflected the support "of the different constituencies we have worked hard to serve." He noted in particular the support around town for balancing development with preserving open land.

"I'm a real environmentalist," said Daphne Byrne as she stepped outside the fire department headquarters after voting for Balestracci. "The Democratic ticket [puts their] money where their mouth is on green issues."

Democrats Matthew Hoey and Michael Ayles and Republican James O'Keefe, all incumbents, won all three seats on the board of finance.

Democrat Kathleen Nolan beat Republican Emelinda Sanacora for a two-year seat on the board of education, filling an unexpired term. The board will have to appoint someone to fill the remaining two years of Cartier's term.

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