

Hamden mayoral candidates debate, answer questions

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HAMDEN - The mayoral candidates Wednesday morning painted differing pictures of how they would run the community during a forum presented by the **Hamden** Chamber of Commerce.

Democratic Mayor Craig B. Henrici said that under his leadership, the town's finances are on the right track, while Republican challenger Ronald Gambardella, an at-large member of the Legislative Council, said taxes are out of control and he's the guy to fix the problem.

The candidates, who spoke at the New Haven Country Club before 45 chamber members, town department heads and political supporters, addressed questions posed by attorney Steven Ciardiello, moderator and chamber member. Questions ranged from how they would bring in new business, to how they would assess the condition of town roads, sidewalks and facilities, to how to more efficiently spend money for education. In his opening statement, Gambardella outlined that he's worked in finance and budgeting and now is self-employed, and because of that knows what it takes to run a successful business, of which he has three. "I will not present a budget to increase taxes," he explained, adding that Henrici's policies will lead to "ever-increasing taxes."

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Continued from B1 Henrici started by saying that in 2005, when he took control of town government, the town's position with rating agencies was deteriorating, the town was running out of money, the unfunded pension liability was headed to \$200 million and there were growing deficits in medical self-insurance and worker compensation funds.

"We've honestly addressed each of these issues and turned our fiscal position around," said Henrici, who is seeking a second term.

Gambardella said that he would like to see a police station and **animal shelter** built on the old Dadio Farm on Putnam Avenue, along

with a new fire station that's already been proposed. He would like to see only a small part of the 11-acre tract sold off to private concerns, whereas Henrici wants to sell off a good portion of the property and build the fire station on 3 to 4 acres. Gambardella said plans are being readied to reuse Memorial Town Hall for offices for police and the Legislative Council and that there would be a new addition for police. Henrici said that roads and sidewalks are now being worked on, and that \$1 million was recently spent on roads. "You cannot pave every road and not raise taxes dramatically," he said.

Gambardella, however, has proposed a sidewalk and road authority made up of district representatives who would review sidewalks that need work and make decisions about which ones get fixed out in the open, because, he said, no one knows how those decisions are made. "We on the council had to request the list of streets. It's done in secrecy," he said.

"To add another layer of bureaucracy is insane. That's why you have a public works director, an assistant director and a town engineer," Henrici retorted.