

# Wogen changes story on anti-Kapitan mailer

A day after saying he had nothing to do with a controversial campaign mailing delivered to 3rd Ward residents less than 24 hours before polls opened on Tuesday, the ward's alderman-elect now admits he helped pay to have about 1,800 of them sent out – but claims he didn't bother to read what was in them first.

Victor Wogen beat three-term incumbent Steve Kapitan by 14 votes out of more than 850 cast. In a glossy, color campaign brochure that endorses Wogen's candidacy and appeared in mailboxes on Monday, Kapitan is referred to as "the go to guy in DeKalb" for a socialist workers group and "extremely pro-gay."

The mailing, from a group called Citizens for a Better 3rd Ward, also includes a list of city property maintenance complaints against Kapitan's Sycamore Road home. On Tuesday night and again on Wednesday afternoon, Wogen claimed he knew little of the mailing before it arrived in his own mailbox.

Wogen told a Chronicle reporter on election night: "We did not send out that flier. It was not from Wogen for 3rd. It was a different group ... We did not send that out."

"It sucks that it's out there," he said early Wednesday afternoon, characterizing its contents as "not appropriate."

Wogen's story changed, however, later on Wednesday, when he was confronted with a report that a clerk at the DeKalb post office sold him extra stamps to mail the pieces on Saturday and later received two tubs of about 1,800 fliers from him.

"He had to purchase additional postage," said postal clerk Rich Hintz on Wednesday. "He paid for the stamps with cash, and came back later with two bins of fliers to be sent. I remember he mentioned his backers a few times."

Wogen said the post office called him on Saturday to tell him about the lack of postage. He then bought stamps to send the fliers out and returned the properly stamped fliers to the post office. He denies any involvement with the content of the mailers but said he spent about \$300 in postage for them.

"All I can tell you is that they were picked up and dropped back off," Wogen said. "I didn't recognize the mailer when I got to the post office. I wasn't sure what to do."

**Brochure implies homosexual, socialist ties**

The brochures include the line "Paid for by Citizens for a Better 3rd Ward," and ask, "Who applauds Steve Kapitan?" The answers, according to the brochure, are [www.socialistworker.org](http://www.socialistworker.org), which regards him "the go to guy in DeKalb," and [www.actwin.com/eatonohio/](http://www.actwin.com/eatonohio/), which rates Kapitan "A+ Extremely Pro-Gay." On the flip side was a photo of a smiling Wogen and his family. Wogen is described as a "family man, working man (and) a third ward alderman in touch with the seniors, neighbors and families of the 3rd ward."

A Google search for "Steve Kapitan" pulls up the Web sites referred to in the mailer within the first three pages of hits. The [socialistworker.org](http://socialistworker.org) reference is from a Nov. 21, 2003, interview the Socialist Worker newspaper did with Rosemarie Dietz Slavenas, a local anti-war activist whose son was killed in Iraq on Nov. 2, 2003.

In the interview, Slavenas says that she gave a copy of a statement she made to the media after her son's death to Kapitan. She then goes on to explain that Kapitan "maneuvered through the (DeKalb) city council the resolution to not support the war."

That nonbinding resolution, which passed the council on a 4-3 vote on Jan. 27, 2003, called on the United States not to make a pre-emptive strike on Iraq. Then-Mayor Greg Sparrow refused to sign it.

The other reference is to a Web site run by a man from Preble County, Ohio. On his site, called "Gay Rights Info," he lists voting records of local, state and federal public officials on various homosexual-rights-related issues. The officials are then given a grade to reflect how amenable they are to issues presumably important to gays.

The page with the Kapitan reference lists two votes by the DeKalb City Council in 1998 to add "sexual orientation" as a protected class under the city's local human rights ordinance and, two years later, to add "gender identity" as a protected class to the ordinance.

According to the Web page referred to in the brochure, not only was Kapitan rated an A+ on these issues, but so were six other current or past aldermen out of 12 listed. Four others received no grade at all because they had not taken a vote on a gay rights issue, and one received an F-.

### **Creators of mailer, Web site unclear**

It remains unclear who is behind the mailer and Citizens for a Better 3rd Ward.

Under state law, political action groups that raise or spend \$3,000 or more on political activities must register as formal political groups with the state. The State Board of Elections Web site does not list Citizens for a Better 3rd Ward as a registered group. The group also did not file with the DeKalb County Clerk and Recorder's Office.

The group's Web site, [www.betterdekalb3rdward.com](http://www.betterdekalb3rdward.com), is registered to David Grier of Skokie. Contacted by the Chronicle on Wednesday, he said he was hired to put the site up and that all the information on it – a photo of Kapitan's house and a list of the property maintenance violations - was provided to him. He declined to say who hired him or who provided the information or how much he was paid for his services.

The site was created on April 10. Mailers like the one sent out by the group would likely cost around \$868 for 500, according to David Perkins, a manager at Le Print Express in DeKalb, although Wogen said there are some 1,800-2,000 households in the 3rd Ward and that his own color, 8.5-by-11-inch mailing to those households cost him about \$1,900.

One of the mailers from Citizens for a Better 3rd Ward included 52 cents in postage, meaning that the group and Wogen could have spent more than \$1,000 in postage for 2,000 of them.

According to City Clerk Donna Johnson, one person has requested information on Kapitan's property maintenance violations this year. Jennifer Hansen, who listed a post office box in Maple Park as her address, submitted a Freedom of Information request for the information on April 3, and it was provided by the city on April 9.

A phone message left Wednesday at a phone listing for a "J & K Hansen" in Maple Park was not returned by Thursday morning. Wogen said he didn't know a Jennifer Hansen in Maple Park.

"I think that (Wogen) has some explaining to do to overcome that he had nothing to do with (the flier)," Kapitan said Thursday morning.

He called it "irresponsible behavior for (Wogen's) campaign" to send out something it didn't look at. Kapitan also said that following an April 12 inspection of his house by city code officials, most of the property maintenance violations have been remedied.

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