



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times

ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL...Mayor of Woodbridge and Democratic gubernatorial candidate James McGreevey, center, discusses his platform with Deborah Madison, a writer for *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood*, in the Leader-Times offices during last Sunday's Spring Fling festival in downtown Westfield. Looking on is former Westfield Mayor Thomas C. Jardim.

James McGreevey Visits Westfield On Campaign Trail for Governor

By DEBORAH MADISON
Specially Written for The Leader and The Times
WESTFIELD — James McGreevey, Mayor of Woodbridge and Democratic candidate for the governorship of New Jersey, visited Westfield on Sunday during the town's annual Spring Fling street fair.

The Mayor shook hands and conversed with many New Jersey residents in the street, before sitting down with a reporter from *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood* to discuss several aspects of his campaign.

Mr. McGreevey was accompanied by former Westfield Mayor Thomas C. Jardim, who is running for the State Assembly, and several Union County Freeholders, who are also running for re-election this year.

When asked his opinion about former Congressman Bob Franks replacing Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco, Mr. McGreevey said this change will not affect his campaign strategy, because both men are Republicans and very similar, in his opinion.

"In '92, the (state) debt was \$4.2 billion; next year it will be \$20 billion. That's a staggering increase," he pointed out.

"This was caused by fiscal irresponsibility," he stated.

"Both Franks and DiFrancesco are Republicans; I see very little difference between how they operate in government," Mr. McGreevey maintained.

"While most of Franks' experience has been in the legislative branch, I think that my executive experience as a Mayor has made me particularly well-suited for the role as Governor," he added.

Mayor McGreevey also said that he has met with and worked exten-

sively with other Mayors and knows the needs of central New Jersey, where he feels his strongest support lies.

He said he is aware of the important issues confronting Union County and, particularly, the issues and concerns that are significant to the residents of Westfield.

"Two of the major issues concerning residents in Union County are traffic and property taxes, while of particular concern to families in this area is achieving excellence in education," he stated.

"*New Jersey Education Weekly* gave New Jersey schools a D + on their report card of the schools," he said. "That should be of great concern to all families with children."

"One of my main areas of focus will be to revise classroom standards and assessments. Currently, teachers are teaching to the test, while they should be teaching, instead, for substantive knowledge. We need to use tests as a diagnostic tool, not an end goal," he added.

Mayor McGreevey also said that, in the past, the state has, at times, been an obstacle instead of a support to local school districts. It is a problem, he noted, which he hopes to correct.

The Mayor was the Democratic nominee for Governor in 1997, losing to Governor Christine Todd Whitman by less than 1 percent of the total vote.

Other aspects of Mr. McGreevey's campaign will focus on automobile insurance reform, ethical standards for public officials, health care and property tax reform, according to his campaign literature.

Mr. McGreevey holds a master's degree in education from Harvard University and a law degree from Georgetown University. He is mar-

ried to Dina Matos McGreevey and they have a daughter, Morag.

Freeholders Mary Ruotolo of Westfield, Lewis Mingo of Plainfield and Daniel P. Sullivan of Elizabeth were also on hand to discuss some of the activities in which the county is currently involved.

Mrs. Ruotolo said the Freeholders have been meeting regularly to discuss plans to allocate moneys from the Open Space Trust Fund.

"The Freeholders have been entrusted by the residents of Union County with a tremendous responsibility to allocate these open space funds," Mrs. Ruotolo stated.

Part of those plans include purchasing land for open space designation, as well as renovating and upgrading parks.

Another significant issue, Mr. Mingo pointed out, has been the redistricting of Plainfield into the 22nd district, grouping it with Scotch Plains and Fanwood, which Plainfield has more in common with in terms of needs and issues.

"This redistricting could have significant impact in the way that Plainfield is perceived and in how funds are allocated to the city," he pointed out.

Ms. Ruotolo also said that plans were underway to build a new Union County Police headquarters and laboratory on North Avenue in Westfield.

"We are close to breaking ground on the new Colonial-style building, which will fit in with the architectural style of Westfield much better," she said.

The Freeholders have also designated the Westfield Symphony Orchestra as the official county orchestra, which means that the Freeholder board will be funding more of the orchestra's programs, said Freeholder Sullivan.

New DWC Director Explains Vision, Goals Aimed at Enhancing Business Community

WESTFIELD — Sherry Cronin, the new Executive Director of the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC) represented Westfield at the recent National Town Meeting on Main Street in Indianapolis, Ind.

This annual event drew over 1,500 Main Street Managers from across the United States and Canada, and was hosted by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Westfield was one of 13 New Jersey communities represented at the conference and is one of the 47 special improvement districts in New Jersey.

Westfield became a Main Street community in May 1993 and is considered one of the more successful Main Street communities in the state, Ms. Cronin stated.

The vision of the DWC is for Westfield to be a preferred destination where people want to live, work, and visit. The DWC is committed to strengthening the downtown special improvement district as the center of community life. This includes improving the district's economic viability by supporting existing businesses and encouraging the establishment of new enterprises and cultural activities that complement existing stores and services.

The DWC will focus on making Westfield's downtown area a safer, cleaner and more attractive pedestrian environment, with adequate public parking in order to serve the needs of local residents and attract new shoppers and visitors from throughout the region.

It is also the goal of the DWC to preserve the rich architectural legacy of the downtown area.

The organization has evolved through visionary leadership of past Executive Directors, volunteer boards and committees, mayors, Town Council members and civic organizations. The DWC is funded via a downtown special improvement district ordinance passed in July 1996. It provides permanent and steady funding for the local Main Street program and ensures continued long range, comprehensive planning and management for downtown renewal.

The total budget for 2001 is \$299,500, of which one third is allocated to downtown promotions. The remainder is designated for design and economic development of the downtown and administrative costs to oversee the running of the DWC.

In 2000, 31 new businesses opened in Westfield that provide over 150 employment opportunities. Of the 31 new stores that opened, 17 were locally owned "mom and pop" and 55 percent were franchise businesses. Six regional

stores opened along with six professional offices and two chain stores.

In addition, seven businesses expanded their operations in the improvement district. Sixteen businesses closed. Another six businesses moved outside the district and seven shops closed for various reasons. The remainder merged with other business inside and outside the district.

Among the goals and objectives for the DWC are enhancing the appearance and safety of downtown Westfield; promoting and enhancing the image of downtown Westfield; leveraging and enhancing partnerships to improve the downtown and empowering volunteers to further the vision and mission of the DWC.

The DWC is currently seeking volunteers to serve on the Organization, Economic Development, Design and Promotion Committees.

To volunteer or to learn more about the committees, please call Ms. Cronin or Meg Mehorter at the DWC at (908) 789-9444.

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