

WF Mayor McDermott Comments on Future Plans

By PAUL PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD – Mayor Gregory McDermott made it official last week – announcing that he and his wife, Andrea, have put their Lawrence Avenue home up for sale.

Mayor McDermott did not indicate where they were looking to move, although sources have indicated he is considering homes outside of Westfield, which would require him to resign as mayor before the end of his term on Saturday, December 31.

The mayor, who has lived in town for 43 years, is completing his second term as mayor. He served three years prior to that as a councilman representing the first ward.

“Our house is on the market,” Mayor McDermott confirmed to *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*. He later added that, “We have been thinking about this for a long time.”

Mayor McDermott said the sale of his home has nothing to do with the defeat of the downtown parking deck/redevelopment project this past November.

He maintained the defeat of the deck proposal, which he had championed, was “never a consideration” in his decision to sell his home.

The McDermotts are the second owners of their home, located at 570 Lawrence Avenue. It is the fourth home the couple has owned in Westfield.

Mr. McDermott said he and his wife began seriously thinking about moving six months ago. They have a son in college and a daughter who will graduate from Westfield High School in June.

“We have our house listed at what we feel is a competitive price,” he said, although he would not disclose the asking price.

According to an advertisement placed in *The Leader/Times* in the February 17 edition, the house is listed for \$1.9 million.

Mayor McDermott said he and his wife believe the five-bedroom Colonial they have lived in for 10 years may be too large for the family, given the fact that both their children will be in college as of this fall.

He said houses on Lawrence Avenue have been selling for competitive prices, adding that whether or not they get their asking price will have a lot to do with whether they move.

“Nothing is happening before June,” Mayor McDermott said, a reference to his daughter’s graduation from the high school.

“We will look at what is best for our

family,” he said. Westfield Town Democratic Committee Chairman Kenneth Rotter said, “I wish the mayor well in whatever he decides to do.”

When asked about the mayor’s potential move, Mr. Rotter responded, “I don’t want to speculate on something that may or may not be true.”

If the mayor were to move out of town before his term expires in December, he would have to resign.

Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (R-21), Westfield Republican Town Committee Chairman, said that to his knowledge the mayor was staying in town and thus would finish out his term.

“I haven’t heard anything at all of his resignation,” Assemblyman Bramnick said.

“When you put your home up for sale, it doesn’t mean you are moving out of town,” he said. “As far as I know, he is continuing (as mayor).”

Acting Town Clerk Claire Gray indicated that if the mayor were to resign, the Republican Town Committee would have 15 days to provide a list of three candidates to the full town council to choose from to fill the office for the remainder of the year. The council would have 35 days to act.

The last time a mayor resigned in Westfield was when Republican Richard Bagger vacated the office following his election to the State Assembly in 1991. The council approved the GOP committee’s selection of Bud Boothe as the new mayor that year.

Mayor McDermott defeated Democrat Marc McCabe in 1997 to win his first term on the council. He was reelected after beating Democrat Marilyn Gulotta in 1999.

He defeated former Westfield Board of Education President Susan Jacobson in 2000 to win his first two-year stint as mayor. In 2002, he was reelected with his defeat of Democrat Thomas Fuccillo for a three-year term.

The governing body voted to change mayoral and council terms from two to four years in 2001, with three-year terms beginning in 2002 and four-year terms starting in 2003. There were no governing body seats up in 2004.

Westfielders will choose their first four-year elected mayor this November.

Mayor McDermott’s father, Frank, is a former state senator and Acting Governor. His brother, Matt, a Cranford resident, served as Deputy Labor Commissioner under Governor Christine Todd Whitman and Acting Governor Donald DiFrancesco.



Mayor McDermott



THIS IS THE PLACE...Keren Zarom, director of My Gym, offers a child a helping hand on the high bar. The facility, located on 110 South Avenue in Westfield, celebrated their grand opening on February 26.

Talking Business

My Gym Geared for Child Development Opens in WF

By FRED K. LECOMTE
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

My Gym, a program for children 3 months to 13 years and where children agree, “This is the place to be,” celebrated its grand opening on 1100 South Avenue, West in Westfield on February 26. Westfield Mayor Greg McDermott, Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce (WACC) President Richard Fromkin, WACC Executive Director Allison O’Hara, My Gym owners Ed and Alyse Rudin, and facility director Keren Zarom, as well as a large number of excited children, parents and guests, attended the ribbon-cutting festivities.

The Rudin’s, who also manage a My Gym location in South Brunswick, explained that children who reside throughout that neighborhood fell head over heels in love with the facility, while parents found it to be a great place to come and observe the development of their children’s growth in strength, flexibility and self-esteem.

“It’s a positive influence on a neighborhood and it brings a lot of benefits as we see it towards the growth of the child,” said Mr. Rudin. “We felt that Westfield was a good neighborhood that warranted it and it was something that was missing in the township as far as we were able to see. The entire concept of My Gym is to bring that feeling of accomplishment.”

“It’s about building children’s self-esteem, building confidence and making them feel good about themselves, thus allowing them to grow as individuals as they grow older. That’s what we’re very high on here,” he added.

At My Gym, all of the equipment is custom-made and inter-changeable with other apparatus. Each week as

the children arrive, they experience a new fresh look, a different physical setup arrangement along with a specially designed program geared towards the development of a child’s personality and growth, along with a learning process that teaches them to count and learn shapes and colors.

The puppet shows are one of the big highlights at the facility and the children love them.

Commenting on the helpfulness and assistance by the Westfield community, Mr. Rudin commented, “The township of Westfield was very helpful. They made it easy for us to get permits, everyone was pleasant and everyone worked with us. From the township to the board, everyone felt it was a product that was wanted and they supported for the health of the business community, so it was a great fit.”

The Rudin’s added that Westfield, as a general rule, is very supportive towards their business community by being supportive and participating in their activities.

From the township perspective, Rudin added, “They’re looking to say to you, ‘Once you become part of the Westfield family, we will embrace you and I believe that comes from both the political structure of the township as well as the residents.’”

Political Invitation

Doug Forrester, Republican candidate for governor, invites interested voters to a complimentary Meet & Greet reception on Sunday, March 6, from 2 to 4 p.m. at L’Affaire in Mountainside.

Please respond by calling Nicole at (609) 452-0101 or email nicole@doug2005.com.

Panel To Set Hearing Dates Regarding Traffic Hot Spots

By PAUL PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD – Town Second Ward Councilman Mark Ciarrocca, Public Safety, Transportation and Parking Committee Chairman, announced at the town council’s February 22 meeting that the Citizens Traffic Advisory Committee is reviewing possible dates for public meetings to garner input from the public concerning eight traffic hot spots that have been identified as needing improvements.

The six-member committee includes residents of each of the four wards as well two at-large members.

“It looks like we are going to have a public meeting with our traffic expert over the course of two nights in March in the Community Room (of the Municipal Building),” he said.

The eight locations include the Franklin and McKinley Elementary School areas, the intersection of Clover Street and Central Avenue, Woodland Avenue, Ayliffe Avenue, the intersection of Lawrence and East Dudley Avenues, the intersections of Lawrence and Walnut Street, and Tuttle Parkway and North Avenue.

Town Administrator Jim Gildea said the town consultant, Keller and Kirkpatrick, would present a report to the council after garnering input during the public hearings. He said if “soft” changes can be completed, such as re-stripping of the road way or added signage and new curbing, that could be accomplished this year. If more construction were necessary the projects would have to be included in next year’s capital budget.

Councilman Ciarrocca noted that the

county agreed to coordinate traffic lights at Central and Park Avenues and Sycamore Avenue and Grove Street as part of their 2005 budget. The county has also agreed to place a left-hand signal lane from Central onto South Avenue. Work for these projects will be completed next year.

The town had asked the county to coordinate traffic signals throughout the Central Avenue corridor as part of the Central Avenue, East Broad Street, and Mountain Avenue traffic signalization project being completed.

With the improvements, Councilman Ciarrocca said, Westfield “will finally have properly coordinated lights going from Clark all the way through the new lights they are putting on Central, Mountain and East Broad. That entire corridor will be properly timed so the traffic will flow a lot better.”

He said the police department has been asked in the interim to see what changes they can make to improve the timing on some of the lights. Councilman Ciarrocca said the light at Central Avenue and Sycamore Avenue is particularly bad.

“Right now it is really, really poorly timed,” he said.

In addition, Councilman Ciarrocca said the committee has asked the engineering department to develop a cost estimate to place sidewalks along Scotch Plains Avenue near the Westfield Memorial Pool. He said the recommendation is to consider pulling the project out of the Memorial Park Master Plan and completing the project separately.

He said he believes the lack of sidewalks has created a “significant safety issue” in the area.

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