



Meeting and Greeting with Peter Clavelle

Euan Bear catches up with Burlington's mayor and prospective gubernatorial candidate.

Mayor Peter Clavelle addresses a gathering last month in Hardwick

Although his official gubernatorial campaign kick-off isn't until February 7 in Winooski, Burlington Mayor Peter Clavelle is clearly out there running. Last month *OITM* caught up with him at a "meet and greet" house party at the home of Caledonia County Democratic Justice of the Peace Linda Markin and artist and teacher Marie Lapre Grabon.

Clavelle told the gathering of at least 50 people, including lesbians, gay men, and straight folks, that to date he had visited 11 of Vermont's 14 counties and 30 towns, and that his campaign had enrolled 300 volunteers. By way of introduction, he went through the familiar tale of his working class background, the grandchild of French-Canadians who came to work in the Winooski woolen mills. "I want you know," he said, "where I'm coming from and who I represent."

On the political front, no one was surprised when he announced, "I am repulsed by the Republicans at both the national level and in the state. The Republicans represent the

wealthy and the powerful." Clavelle combined criticism of the Bush administration's policies with potshots at those of the Douglas administration. "But I'm not running against Bush," he said.

In a brief review of his past accomplishments, Clavelle joked about the "voter-inspired sabbatical" he was "granted" from 1993 to 1995. The mayor was defeated at the polls in what was widely viewed as a backlash against Clavelle's institution of domestic partnership benefits for same-sex couples.

Among his issues, he said, is "sustainable development, and by that I mean thinking about the future, about how our decisions affect our kids and grandkids. I want to take an integrated approach to development, including education, jobs, equity, and the environment."

He expects, he said, to have a spirited campaign, because "Jim Douglas is no slouch" at campaigning. But, he added, he intends to take the "high road" and criticize the policies and not the person.

"The Republicans are on the wrong

road on health care," Clavelle declared, citing the elimination of community ratings as providing too much profit for insurance companies. Likewise Clavelle critiqued the Douglas administration's "poor excuse for an energy policy" as "an embarrassment," lacking any mention of renewable sources of energy.

Clavelle added the traditional Democratic issues of education equity – including opposition to extending school choice through vouchers ("It is important that we build strong communities through our schools."), and the promotion of sustainable economic development ("Walmart is not sustainable economic development. We need jobs that pay livable wages.")

The candidate-to-be invited questions from the assembled voters. The questions covered a range of issues, beginning with elder care. Clavelle suggested that reimportation of drugs from Canada could not wait for permission from the FDA: "The FDA is not part of the solution, they're the problem," he said.

Other questions touched on mental

health care, the exorbitant cost of tuition at state colleges, global warming's impact on Vermont's ski resort economy, opposition to the impact of wind farms on the landscape and birds, safe schools, and how Clavelle would get to 50 percent at the polls.

Asked about "the elephant in the room," potential primary opponent Peter Shumlin, Clavelle said he and Shumlin had both appeared earlier that day at an AFL-CIO meeting in Barre. "He's gotta decide. My gut says he wants to [run]." Clavelle denied any knowledge of whether Progressive Anthony Pollina would run again for statewide office.

"The media have given Governor Jim Douglas a free ride," Clavelle charged. "The only credible poll, done by WCAX, shows that if we were in a head-to-head contest right now, 44 percent would vote for Douglas and 33 percent for me. I am an underdog, it's a position I relish." ▼

To learn more about Peter Clavelle's campaign, click on his website ClavelleforGovernor.com

R.U.1.2? Gets \$27K Cyber Center Grant

R.U.1.2? Community Center has been awarded \$27,000 to establish the David Bohnett Cyber Center at the agency. A third of the grant is in cash, the rest in "top of the line" equipment, according to executive director Christopher Kaufman.

"This technology will improve the quality of services for our community. It might even encourage straight people to come in," Kaufman said. "R.U.1.2? has a fair number of allies – perhaps one in ten – who come in or participate on some level. We also hope to promote the use of the cyber center to other agencies, such as Spectrum, the women's Rape Crisis Center, and SafeSpace."

Kaufman said the grant proposal also includes formal classes on computer technology in the service of job training, and the use of computers for resumé writing and Internet activism, among other possibilities. There's also a less formal plan for a "cyber café" to provide open access to computers that is also safe and confidential.

For example, clients of SafeSpace, an LGBTIQ anti-violence program, might use the cyber café to search online for resources or housing in a search for safety that would be dangerous on a home computer. Kaufman also said there would be no filters on the cyber center, unlike computers at schools, that would likely prevent youth from

getting information and resources about being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

The Bohnett Foundation was established by David Bohnett, the 47-year-old founder of GeoCities, an Internet-based media and e-commerce company. GeoCities was acquired by Yahoo! Inc. in 1999.

The foundation has funded 15 cyber centers to date, according to Kaufman, primarily in large urban locations. He thinks one of the selling points of R.U.1.2?'s grant proposal was that even though it's in the center of Vermont's largest city, R.U.1.2? is considered a rural community center.

Among the equipment that will be

showing up soon are nine IBM "Think Center" computers, a printer, a scanner, software, and a three-year on-site service contract. Kaufman is confident that two of the other cyber centers – both of whom had assisted with his grant proposal – will help with the set-up by sharing the policies and procedures they've found that work for them.

Kaufman plans to have the cyber center up and running by July 1. The major current obstacle is a lack of space at the existing headquarters. A search for new space has been underway for over a year, although the new grant is expected to energize that search. ▼