

strong advocates for the continuation of the social agendas that have been criticized by some. Yes, delivery of basic services, police, fire, street maintenance are important. There's so much more that's important to the heart and soul of this community. If Burlington is to continue to be one of America's most liveable cities we must maintain our commitment to a social agenda, one which strives towards a community which is inclusive. This is a changing community. There are more African-Americans, there are nearly 1000 refugees that have settled in this community, and there's a substantial population of gays and lesbians. It's critically important that we create an environment within this community that is tolerant, inclusive, and which is committed to end discrimination. One of the roles that city government can play in addition to providing political leadership is to enforce the rules that are on the books concerning fair housing, to also make certain that the prohibitions of the city's labor contracts and personnel policies against discrimination sexual orientation are applied.

OITM: I take it that you're supportive of the Community Based Police and their outreach to the Gay and Lesbian Community.

Clavelle: Absolutely. I was an initiator of the Community Police Project. I think if the police officers can get to know the community in a broad sense that we'll all be better served by the police officers, by the police department. Certainly if police officers get to know gays and lesbians on a personal basis I think that will substantially improve communications and also respect for one another.

OITM: Is there any legacy that you want to or feel you are leaving from your two terms in office?

Clavelle: Well, I'll leave behind a num-

ber of accomplishments which will live on. Significant progress in creating a waterfront that can be used and enjoyed by everyone in this community; affordable housing initiatives which understand that decent housing is a basic right, not a privilege; economic development initiatives that attempted to break down barriers that have prevented certain segments of the population from enjoying the better paying jobs while at the same time creating decent jobs; progress in the fight for statewide property tax reform. I guess one of my proudest accomplishments is being able to leave office with my principles and my integrity intact. I feel that in my years as Mayor I took on some tough issues, knowing that some were not politically popular issues to tie myself to, but I always did what I thought was right irrespective of the political consequences. I'll leave office with my head high.

OITM: Do you see a future for yourself in political life? Do you want to go further?

Clavelle: I certainly am not ruling out anything, nor am I ready to begin a campaign for the next office. I'm hoping to have some time off, spend some time with my family. I'm hoping to spend some time working in a developing country, living in a different culture.

OITM: Do you know where?

Clavelle: As I look out the window, see the snow on the ground, observe the thermometer hovering around zero, Central America or the Caribbean sounds enticing. I really think that all politicians have a choice to make. The basic choice is will we pander to people's fears or will we provide the political leadership necessary to create an inclusive community. I've tried to do the latter. I think we've made some progress, and I guess that's as significant a legacy as I could ask for. There's a community in Burlington which

is energized, which partially as a result of this election might become more active. I'm hoping that will be the case. I'm also hoping that in time this domestic partnership issue will be looked upon as being a fairly silly debate, in the sense that it involved health insurance benefits for, at this point, four individuals. But it will also be understood to be much bigger than health insurance benefits, a statement for fairness, equity for all of our citizens, all of our workers. I've heard from many gays and lesbians that they've felt empowered and supported as a result of this action by the city council. That makes it worthwhile.

OITM: Is there any specific message or communication you want to send out through this interview to gays and lesbians, and whoever else reads it, throughout the state and here in Burlington?

Clavelle: Certainly my involvement with this domestic partnership issue has put me in touch with how difficult it must be to be openly gay or lesbian in this society. I have tremendous respect and support for gays and lesbians who every day deal with societal attitudes. It's a tough battle but we can't walk away from it. Hopefully together we as a community and as a state can continue to make progress, to break down barriers, to open minds and end discrimination. I guess I'm also hopeful that the coming months particularly in Burlington will be a time of healing. Burlington has been and I believe will continue to be a caring and compassionate community. I think over the next few months it's going to be important for us to give others a little slack, an opportunity. I hope that the gay and lesbian community extends to Mayor Peter Brownell the opportunity to be an effective political leader committed to fairness and equity. ▼

Next Month: An interview with Mayor Peter Brownell



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