

OITM: Anything you want to add?

Brownell: Nope, nothing I can think of, except that I've got an awful lot of stuff to learn in a short period of time. The best I can do is to keep in touch with the different constituencies and different groups. I'm hoping that I can organize things so that I can, on a regular basis, continue to talk with somebody that represents the various groups.
If I wanted to talk to who represents...

OITM: There really is not a single representative. If what you're saying is that you're approachable, and you want people to be able to call you with questions or if they have education to offer you there are people who will. The idea that the Mayor's office is open to people and accessible is very important. It might be worth having a gay man and a lesbian who are considered liaisons to the Mayor's office like Keith Goslant and Holly Perdue are statewide liaisons to the Governor's office. They are people who are known in the gay and lesbian community and who people feel comfortable going to, and they represent interests to the office.

Brownell: That would be a tremendous help to me to try to get that started, to get that organized. That would be a tremendous help.

OITM: One of the things that Peter Clavelle said is that he hopes people will be open to the new administration. My impression is that it's an amiable transition.

Brownell: It'll be an interesting transition. There are a number of people who are expecting a clean sweep of city government, and other people who are hoping that absolutely nothing changes. I'm sure that the truth will be somewhere in between. There will be some changes, but I really hope that we can do it with as little acrimony as possible. Peter has been fantastic, not only in terms of making himself available, but in making his staff available. People have been very very positive. Peter and I probably agreed on 95% of what he did. I've worked with him on the city council for years.

OITM: You supported a number of his initiatives.

Brownell: Absolutely. Working on the finance committee one works more closely with the Mayor than if one is just on the city council.

Brownell: I've always believed that communication is the key to good relations and tolerance. The people that have lived in Richmond or Colchester all their lives...I've lived in Viet Nam, I've lived in Turkey, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. You can't go to all those places and not develop an appreciation for different people and different ideas and different beliefs. If you just live in some small town in Vermont all your life it's very difficult to adjust to anything that's different than what you're used to. Burlington's becoming a very cosmopolitan city, and that's not going to be reversed with the new administration. Burlington will continue to grow and change.

OITM: Do you support the President's intention to lift the ban? (On lesbians and gays in the military).

Brownell: I support the intention. It's going to be a learning experience. There are men and women in the military now, and there was a time when people said "Women in the military, what are you going to do about the sex thing?" And it works fine. People get into a situation where they're working together in the military, all those problems people thought were totally insurmountable were not. I think it's just a matter of time.

Author's Note: Mayor Brownell has expressed a positive regard for the gay and lesbian community and a willingness to be educated by and to serve. I think we should take him up on the latter. I hope that there are gay men and lesbians who are interested in functioning as liaisons to the Mayor's office. All it takes is a phone call to city hall, 658-9300, and an appointment with the new Mayor. I also hope he comes to Pride Day as he said he would, and marches with us. ▼

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