

Jeffrey, Robin

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Mayor Robin Jeffrey and Lahr's Lord mayor Oberbürgermeister Dr. Philipp Brucker

Robin Jeffrey

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During election time, people begin to examine the impact a mayor has had on the community.

It is also an interesting time to look back at the tenures of former mayors. Decisions which are made in the past that are still prominent in the future can show the true value of a mayor.

Former Belleville mayor Robin Jeffrey was part of many decisions that are still visible in Belleville.

Jeffrey was the mayor of Belleville from 1973 until 1975. After serving as an alderman on Belleville city council from 1967 to 1972, Jeffrey thought it was time to become the head of council or to move on to something else. So she decided to run against incumbent mayor Dr. Russell Scott. Jeffrey defeated Scott and started her term as mayor on Jan. 1, 1973.

At the time of her election, female mayors were uncommon. So much so that Jeffrey was only the second female mayor in Belleville's history. But Jeffrey said she ran into no problems because she was a woman in a job historically held by a man.

"I think that are community was ready for a woman who had been on council and knew city politics to take the chair," Jeffrey said.

During her term, one thing Jeffrey focused on was the development of parks and green area in the city.

"The whole idea of pushing the development of that was, we knew our city in future years would expand, to provide green to surround the city. A space for recreation," Jeffrey said.

Jeffrey also played a large part in the purchase of the Glanmore house as a heritage building.

In 1974 facing no opponent, Jeffrey was acclaimed as mayor for the second term. But her stint as mayor ended in 1975, before her term expired. Jeffrey decided to step down to run for provincial government.

One of the highlights during her final days at the city's top post was the initial Friendship



Flight between Belleville and its twin city, Lahr, Germany. The twinning of the two communities has continued to see exchange of students annually, as well as reciprocal flights by its citizens.

Jeffrey became the local candidate for the Progressive Conservative Party. However, she lost the election by a mere 300 votes.

She felt hurt by the loss, and the fact she was no longer mayor of Belleville. Looking back Jeffrey now says that resigning as mayor and running for Queen's Park is the one thing she would change.

"I didn't have to resign. I did that because my energies were now thinking about the provincial election rather than the city of Belleville," Jeffrey said.

But losing the election opened another door for Jeffrey - running a business. From 1975 to 1978 Jeffrey worked with a travel agency in Toronto.

In 1978, Jeffrey, along with partner Vera Morphy, opened J M Seven Seas Travel in Belleville. Jeffrey has been in business ever since.

In 1995, she became the sole owner of the business. Jeffrey says her travel business is too involved to get back in politics, although she does keep an eye on things.

She also says, "whether it's municipal government or a business, the important thing is you must like people. You must like to work with them, hear their comments. You have to like people."

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