

GETTING TO KNOW YOU:

Mayor Eileen Weir, City of Independence



Eileen Weir
Mayor, City of Independence

WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

I had been actively involved in Independence since moving to town in 2000. I worked on some grassroots initiatives and served on numerous

nonprofit boards and committees around the region which allowed me to develop relationships with the elected officials and city staff, as well as business and civic leaders. I had volunteered to work on some issues campaigns and candidate campaigns and gained knowledge about how to organize and execute a successful campaign. When my city council district seat became open in 2012, I looked for a candidate to support. When I couldn't find one, I ran for the seat and won. Two years into my four year council district term, I ran for Mayor and was elected in April 2014.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE TOUGHEST LESSON YOU HAVE LEARNED DURING YOUR CAREER IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

The pace of government is not like the private sector. I worked in the NFL for ten years and ran my own public relations consulting firm before being elected Mayor. I was used to a fast-paced environment and being the sole decision maker, which is not how it works in public service.

Dealing with the public's money and representing the public's interest requires time and patience.

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN MISSOURI?

Traditional revenue sources are being eliminated making it very challenging to fund the services citizens expect and deserve from their cities. City and county leaders need to recognize that dependence on traditional sources is not sustainable, and we need to change our thinking and policies to adapt to the changes in consumer and voter behavior.

WHAT IS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT GOAL THIS YEAR AS YOU SERVE WITH THE MML BOARD OF DIRECTORS?

I want to understand how MML is perceived by its member cities and by those we are trying to influence including the legislature, executive branch, and businesses across the state. I want to work to create and strengthen positive relationships.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER TO SOMEONE CONSIDERING SERVICE AS A LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL IN THEIR COMMUNITY?

It is fun! Elected officials at the local, state and federal level complain too much about how hard and thankless the job is. That doesn't inspire people to aspire to elected office. It is rewarding and enjoyable most of the time, and we need to celebrate the successes more than we do and stop adding to the general negativity about government.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR CITY TO SOMEONE WHO HAD NEVER VISITED?

Independence is rich in history and has preserved a nostalgic feel around our historic town square. It is the hometown of President Harry Truman, the jumping-off point for the Santa Fe, Oregon, California, and

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Mormon pioneer trails, and the world headquarters of the Community of Christ church. Independence is also a premium trade area in Eastern Jackson County, offering a vast array of retail and entertainment options including the Silverstein Eye Centers Arena, home of the Missouri Mavericks hockey team and Missouri Comets soccer team; the Independence Center mall; and Bass Pro Shops. For outdoor enthusiasts, Independence has miles of hiking and biking trails, beautiful, well-maintained parks, the George Owens Nature Center and is within a short drive to Jackson County parks that offer boating, fishing, and other outdoor activities.

WHAT ARE YOUR INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

My profession is in communications and publicity, so I have a strong interest in using those skills in my role as Mayor to promote Independence, and I still assist several local organizations with public relations and fundraising efforts. My husband and I love the out of doors and spend a lot of time on the trail system around Jackson County and the Kansas City metro. I enjoy being productive, so I am always working to build relationships that benefit Independence whether I'm in the office, out in the community or on vacation!

WHERE WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO TRAVEL, AND WHY?

My favorite trips have been to natural wonders like Yosemite, Yellowstone and the Canadian Rockies, and I love big cities like New York and Tokyo. Independence has a Japanese Sister City, and I am really hopeful I will get a chance to return to Japan and visit our sister city. □

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