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TERM ENDING

Exiting freeholder pledges to stay involved

By Joseph Sapia
Staff Writer

As Amy A. Mallet's tenure as a member of the Monmouth County Board of Freeholders ends, she says her plan is to remain active publicly.

"I care about the people of this county," said Mallet, whose three-year term ends Thursday, when county government organizes for 2012. "I put so much in over the last three years. Whether elected or not, I plan to stay involved."

Exactly how? That is the unknown.

Mallet, 55, of Fair Haven could remain active within county government. She, for example, has applied to become a

member of the Brookdale Community College board of trustees, a volunteer position.

But that would require the 2012 five-member, all-Republican freeholders board to appoint Mallet, a Democrat, to one of three vacancies.

Or she could run in November's general election for a freeholder's seat, either the full, three-year term now held by John P. Curley or a one-year unexpired term of Robert D. Clifton, who is resigning to take a seat in the state Assembly.

After all, Mallet, who lost her seat in this past November's election, has name recognition. But that may not be in the cards.

"I don't have plans to run in November (for freeholder) at this point," Mallet said. "Right now, I'm not thinking about that."

Mallet's 2008 victory to a freeholder's seat was her first successful run for government. Previously, she had run unsuccessfully for the Assembly.

"I really just need the time to take a step back and determine how my time could be best-spent," Mallet said.

Mallet, married with two children in their 20s, owns a Neptune marketing company. She plans to do some work with the National Association of Women Busi-



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Freeholder Amy Mallet

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ness Owners.

"Amy, you're an intelligent, gracious person and a strong advocate for what you believe in," Curley said at her last regular meeting, Dec. 22.

When Freeholder Thomas A. Arnone joined the board a year ago, "all the freeholder board, including Amy, welcomed me," he said. The freeholders may have differences of opinion, but "we were able to work through them," Arnone said.

"I enjoyed working with her," Arnone said. "I respected her. Her issues in her mind were best for Monmouth County."

"I'm leaving this office, I know I could walk

with my head high," Mallet said.

Mallet looked to accomplishments:

» The county adapting to solar energy, which will have a project savings in energy costs of \$1.7 million over 15 years, while educating the public on clean, renewable energy.

» Creation of a Veterans Services Office, expanding aid to military veterans, without adding costs by expanding an office on aging, disabilities and veterans services. In 2011, approximately 1,700 used the office.

» Adding transparency to government. Now, the public can listen to recordings of the freeholders meetings online, rather than having to come to the county Hall of Rec-

ords in Freehold.

» Making the county counsel's office in-house, resulting in lowering costs of annual legal fees by an estimated \$670,000 from 2008.

What Mallet failed to get through are term-limits for members of county boards that have spending powers, such as the Library Commission and Brookdale Community College; minutes posted online of all boards; and a listing of county workers and their salaries online.

"We need to shine a light on government," Mallet said.

Mallet's last meeting as a freeholder will be Thursday, when the board wraps up 2011 financial and other business. The board organizes for the year later in the day.

As Mallet was cleaning out her Hall of Records office in recent days, she noted an urn her husband, Lester, got her for her stint as a freeholder. On it is the Serenity Prayer "God grant me the serenity . . ."

She also had a giant aspirin paperweight on her desk.

"There are days I just want to consume that thing," Mallet said.

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