

Republicans make a clean sweep in Grand Island town election

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Supervisor Nathan McMurray, the lone Democrat on the Grand Island Town Board, said he "campaignned hard" to fill two open board seats with Democrats.

But Republicans Peter J. Marston Jr. and Jennifer Baney easily took the two spots, which were left open when the current Republicans on the board, Raymond Billica and Christopher Aronica, declined to run. Marston with 4,150 votes and Baney with 3,541 beat out Cynthia R. Montana, McMurray's former clerk, who had 2,679 votes and Celia N. Spacone with 2,568, according to unofficial Erie County Board of Election totals.

Recently appointed Republican Highway Superintendent Richard W. Crawford Jr. also edged out Democratic challenger Daniel C. Drexilius, 3,392 votes to 3,291, according to unofficial results.

McMurray, who was narrowly elected by just two votes two years ago, said the loss on Tuesday was crushing.

"It's partially about me as a supervisor, but I will continue to be me," said McMurray, who admits he is outspoken and strong willed.

"Obviously, I need to be more careful and empathetic as a human being - you always need to be a better person. But if you think I'm going to change my core beliefs or values because of one election - no way," McMurray said.

McMurray has come under fire for his support of the removal of the West River Parkway to make way for a bike path and walking trail along the Niagara River, but he points to that and other state investments, including the planned Welcome Center and cashless tolling with unconcealed pride.

Has he lost his mandate from the people?

"No. My mandate lasts for four years from the day I was elected.," he said "You can run to stay or run to get things done. It's always been my goal to get things done. If you are popular and well-liked you are one politician. If you want to achieve change, you have to hope that change will be enough to get you reelected."

Marston and Baney will join current board members Michael Madigan, a Republican and a frequent opponent to McMurray, and Beverly Kinney, an Independent who ran as an endorsed Democrat.