

McMurray won't seek another term as Grand Island supervisor

By [Stephen T. Watson](#) | Published February 11, 2019 | Updated February 11, 2019

Nathan D. McMurray won't seek another term as Grand Island supervisor because he has his eye on another race – a rematch with Rep. Chris Collins in the 27th Congressional District.

McMurray, who was elected supervisor in 2015, said he does plan to stay in office through the end of the year to finish out his term.

"I can commit to the next 10 months," McMurray told The Buffalo News on Monday. "I can't commit to the next four years."

The Democrat who narrowly lost to the incumbent in November in the heavily Republican district has kept up the pressure on Collins through his Twitter posts and soon will start holding town hall meetings in every county in the district.

The unsuccessful congressional race was McMurray's second political campaign, following the contest for supervisor four years ago. The attorney for Delaware North defeated incumbent and longtime Town Board member Mary S. Cooke by 14 votes out of 5,500 cast, including absentee and affidavit ballots.

He is the only Democrat on a Town Board that includes three Republicans and one Independent, and he has clashed at times with other board members.

But McMurray said he is proud of what's happened on the island since he took office at the start of 2016, and he wants to carry that progress through the rest of 2019.

He pointed to development along Grand Island Boulevard, the West River Parkway multiuse trail, the opening of the State Thruway Authority's Welcome Center and the opening of a Holiday Inn Express at the long-vacant former Hooker Chemical Co. headquarters, among other projects.

"I do think the people of Grand Island can see what we've accomplished," McMurray said.

McMurray has complained publicly about board actions. But he said there are members he can work with and he wants to stay to see through a handful of ongoing projects, notably the question of whether the town should acquire CannonDesign's headquarters for use as a new town hall.

McMurray said he believes he could win re-election as supervisor, but Dean Morakis, the town Republican chairman, disagrees.

"A lot of the Democrats that voted for him have come to say they made a mistake," he said.

Morakis blasted McMurray as an "absentee supervisor" who leaves most of the day-to-day operations of the town to his deputy supervisor, James Sharpe.

"He's never in the office," Morakis said.

McMurray said his job allows him the flexibility to deal with town matters during daytime hours, when needed, but he works effectively with Sharpe and his administrative assistant.

"I think my record speaks for itself," McMurray said.

Republicans have nominated John Whitney, a former Grand Island town engineer, as their supervisor candidate for this fall. Democrats, who only just learned McMurray's decision this weekend, haven't picked a replacement.

McMurray said he hopes the town party endorses Sharpe, who previously served on the Town Board.

"I think the town will be left in good hands," said McMurray.

McMurray was largely unknown in Buffalo Niagara political circles when he launched his campaign last year against Collins, a Clarence Republican. McMurray's long shot bid wasn't taken seriously until Collins was indicted on charges of insider trading.

Collins won't stand trial on the federal charges until 2020. He has denied the charges and vowed to serve out his term.

McMurray has continued to slam Collins in the months since the election and he will hold his first town hall session in the district in Geneseo on Feb. 23.

"I think we have to hold Mr. Collins accountable," he said.