

WAYNESBORO – Dade Royer built the framework for his Waynesboro mayoral candidacy on his recent leadership roles. Those qualifications, honed during his tenure as a borough councilman, and further polished by his participation in various civic and charitable organizations, make Royer a formidable candidate for the borough’s top executive position.

However, the foundation for Royer’s leadership architecture began more than 200 years earlier, when his ancestors immigrated from Germany and settled in Waynesboro during its founding era. Dade Royer has visited that foreign nation, and he pictures his ancestor’s first trek over the mountains into Pennsylvania’s Cumberland Valley.

When seeing this local landscape for the first time, he imagines those Royer settlers experiencing an immediate attraction. “This is beautiful country,” Royer said, “and visually similar to their German homeland.”

The early Royer family traditions survive, interpreted with an educational perspective at their pioneer homestead, now known as Renfrew Museum and Park. The property is honored on the National Register of Historic Places, and Renfrew attracts thousands of visitors annually. This sense of place resonates with Dade Royer. “I feel it’s my duty to serve the community; it’s a big reason why I’m running for mayor.”



The Royer family heritage is preserved at Renfrew, called the Gem of Waynesboro. Royer grew up active in Waynesboro sports and school activities. He served as class president at East Junior High School, which signaled an early inclination toward leadership. As a member of various athletic teams, he learned lessons of collaboration and sportsmanship. As an adult, Royer has coached various sporting teams.

After his schooling, Royer married his wife, Wendy. She developed her leadership skills within the education field, serving as a teacher and later school superintendent during her career. Wendy Royer is a current Waynesboro School Board member. The Royers raised two sons and have three grandchildren from a 43-year marriage.

The Royers lived in the Harrisburg area for 12 years. When they returned to Waynesboro, Royer's enthusiasm for his hometown grew when he saw it actively engaged in a revitalization. "There was a focused effort to bring businesses and culture back to downtown."

This positive development inspired Royer, and he has participated in various leadership positions, furthering the town's continuing renaissance. Royer served as a board member in organizations such as the American Cancer Society of Franklin County, YMCA, Rotary Club of Waynesboro and Otterbein Church.

In 2018, Royer was appointed to a vacant seat on the Waynesboro Borough Council. Voters elected him to serve as a Ward 1 representative to the council in 2019 and 2021. Now serving his third term, he is the panel's vice president. Royer is proud of the council's recent accomplishments. Several completed infrastructure projects have added safety features and provided new recreational aspects to Waynesboro.

One project was the Ed Miller Trail, which connects Memorial Park to Renfrew Park. Another success story was upgraded lighting installed downtown and on Walnut Street. Royer served as the council liaison to the Recreation Board and led the Property and Safety Committee. He is also enthusiastic about a proposed Waynesboro Heritage Trail, which would provide for the installation of bronze markers as self-guided tour stops, highlighting local historic buildings and sites. Royer believes tourism is a vital industry for Waynesboro's future economic growth.

Royer cites the borough's many partnerships as vital tools helping improve downtown. Many new businesses have sprouted, and the town enjoys increasing social events and cultural happenings. "Main Street Waynesboro is a great organization," Royer said, mentioning one example of a local group creating sustained success.

Envisioning an evolution in his Waynesboro leadership journey, Royer recognizes significant differences exist between serving on the borough council and leading as mayor. "I take those challenges very seriously," he said, noting the mayor's primary responsibility is managing the police force.

Royer foresees a two-pronged approach to ensure an effective public safety program. At the forefront, he believes in strict law enforcement, especially fighting illegal drugs.

“I’m going to be an advocate for drug prevention,” he said, stressing those substances can tear apart the fabric of a community.

Royer believes an equal complement to a well-functioning police force is “building relationships within the community.” His plan to facilitate this policy is to hire officers with ties to the local area.

One potential resource idea is developing a junior program at the vo-tech level to train future police officers, firefighters and EMT personnel. “These people will be committed to our community. They’ll want a town that’s not only safe but one where people can communicate freely with the officers who serve it.”

Waynesboro has a police force of 20 officers and recently promoted Ryan Ramsey as its new police chief. Royer noted Ramsey’s stellar performance since assuming command last September.

“I look forward to working with him if I’m elected,” Royer said. He also pointed out Ramsey has southern Pennsylvania roots, reinforcing the mindset that home-grown officers create positive influences on the communities they serve.

The police department faces the challenge of cramped and outdated quarters at the town’s landmark building, city hall. The iconic Italianate structure (built in 1881) originally functioned as the Academy of Music and also served as a small fire hall and town library at different points during its storied history. However, the building’s original design never contemplated housing a law enforcement agency.

A recent borough feasibility study centered on developing the old East Junior High School property on E. Main Street for a new public service building housing police, fire

and emergency services. The Borough no longer owns the property, and options to reacquire and develop it are problematic.

Royer said at the most recent town council meeting, members passed three resolutions to study the design and construction of an addition to the existing town hall. This project would build onto the rear section instead of pursuing East Junior High's vacant property.

"I believe this plan may be the most cost-effective way, by using assets we already own," Royer said about this new development. Waynesboro's government has sufficient funds saved for the building addition if this course is chosen, according to Royer.

Royer is committed to public safety. The police headquarters project, along with a plan to upgrade the fire department building on Potomac Street (or build a new structure at another location), are decisions with long-term implications that should use intelligent planning and resources, the mayoral candidate noted. Royer also learned valuable lessons he'll use as mayor through his work on the Fire and Police Negotiating Committee, helping secure contracts with those respective unions.

Conceiving and achieving big projects often requires cooperation and help from county, state and federal agencies. "We have strong relationships with our local government representatives and both Pennsylvania senators," Royer said. He added coordination with local townships is another key component to improving public safety and quality of life.

Royer touted Waynesboro's strong grant-writing group, which has a dozen projects in progress. "As Mayor, I will fight to bring grant money and other resources to Waynesboro. It's a competitive atmosphere, and the more we receive, the more we can accomplish for our community."



Waynesboro's Town Hall is the home of the police department, the responsibility of the Mayor's office Royer sees the mayor's position as a unique opportunity, serving as the only elected executive within a borough governmental system. "You can craft the mayor's job to best meet the needs of the community," Royer noted.

This philosophy includes Royer's desire to advocate for the town's current businesses and attract new ones, in both the retail and industrial sectors. "I will do whatever I can to help businesses thrive."

Waynesboro has a tradition of long-serving mayors, including the town's current and retiring office holder, Dick Starliper, with 20 years at the helm. Royer realizes the mayor's office includes ceremonial and unofficial duties to help promote the town and all its attributes. "I intend to make decisions and serve that role for the community's benefit."

Royer recognizes each town has its challenges. "When problems arise, we have to come together and meet those challenges." He cited the need for better public mental health resources, improving pedestrian safety, combatting illegal drugs and recruiting

quality law enforcement officers as challenging goals if elected Waynesboro's next mayor.

Considering the borough's future, Royer is optimistic. When asked about the best quality of his hometown, he said: "It's the people. This is a great community. People in Waynesboro create relationships and they help out when there's a problem or need. They're generous and very giving. That's the type of people they are."

As a grandparent, Royer looks forward with upcoming generations in mind. "I want to help make Waynesboro a place where people want to live, and everyone has opportunities. We build this ideal not only for ourselves but for future residents."

Royer's policies complement his respect for the past. He once served as president of the Renfrew Board, his family's homeplace, before turning the keys over to the next generation of leadership. Royer is excited about Renfrew's future, which includes a new grist mill scheduled for completion soon. He also cherishes the property's legacy as a symbol of his family's proud heritage. Many locals call Renfrew the "Gem of Waynesboro."

Royer's campaign kicks into higher gear this month with newly printed yard signs and flyers. He formed an election committee to help finance his run, and interested voters can donate or learn more about him on his campaign's website: daderoyer.com.

"I feel I'm the best candidate to serve the needs of Waynesboro," Royer said. "I have experience in government these past six years, and I've built relationships that help things get done."

