

# Wildes to step down



LESLIE BARBARO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPH

Englewood Mayor Michael Wildes heading up the stairs for his announcement. He said his greatest achievement was "uniting the city."

## Englewood mayor won't seek 3rd term, mulls higher office

By **MAYA KREMEN**  
STAFF WRITER

ENGLEWOOD — Mayor Michael Wildes announced Friday that he won't seek a third term after six years in office.

Family, work and politics were the deciding factors, he said at an afternoon press conference at City Hall.

"While I am committed to give 100 percent to my job as mayor for the remainder of my current term, I am not

prepared to serve another three years as mayor with the same level of commitment," he said.

Wildes said he would look in the future to run for higher office. He did not say what office he would pursue.

He currently has nearly a million dollars in his war chest, including \$58,000 in campaign funds for state Senate, \$600,000 in congressional campaign funds and \$75,000 in mayoral campaign money.

Wildes often clashed with other current council members over issues from ideas for a community center to an investigation of the former police chief, to board appointments, some of whom he handed out to close friends and political donors.

"To run for office, one has to be willing to be called a racist, or have it be suggested that they are operating just this side of the law, with no basis in fact," he said. "Often those leveling ac-

cusations of this sort are themselves violating the very standards they hold for others."

Councilman Scott Reddin and Councilwoman Charlotte Bennett Schoen each said Friday that they are considering running for the open mayor's seat in this year's election.

Whoever does run will be following a known vote-getter and fund-raiser.

Wildes, who will soon become  
See **WILDES** Page L

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ENGLEWOOD MAYOR MICHAEL WILDES

# Wildes

From Page L-1

managing partner in the prestigious immigration law practice his father founded, managed to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for his campaigns from donors as diverse as Alan Der-showitz and Britney Spears. He has been a very visible mayor, appearing at ribbon cuttings for even the smallest business, handing out food and other giveaways, and giving residents his personal cellphone number. He hosted events at his home for the likes of Hilary Clinton and foreign dignitaries, and claims to get no more

than three hours of sleep a night.

Many of the events he attended were documented in photos on his Web site. He also sent out numerous fliers and e-mails featuring his photo, prepared with a professional gloss.

"I think I made some graphic designers and some printers very wealthy," he joked at his press conference.

He also has a sphere of influence that spanned the Orthodox community and pastors of black churches, several of whom he appointed to boards. His greatest achievement, in his opinion, was "uniting the city." He also said he thought he had brought developers' money into Englewood that led to a downtown business ren-

naissance and money in city coffers. He cautioned against future mayors "making developer a dirty word."

"It's through their participation that we're able to build schools and buy firetrucks," he said.

Wildes had his critics. Councilman Gordon Johnson said that while Wildes has been a dedicated mayor, his relationship with developers was "questionable."

"We have to make sure that all these development deals are transparent," he said. "I believe that during his tenure, they could have been more transparent. In the future we have to be mindful that all conflicts are eliminated."

Wildes said that he was stepping down with a "heavy heart."

His eyes welled up when he talked about how an incident with his daughter had caused him to listen more to residents. He said that one of his most memorable moments was conducting the marriage of a man in the terminal stages of cancer at his bedside.

But he also said Englewood's particular political sandbox may be too small for his ambitions. Englewood's mayor has appointment power over several boards, but does not vote on resolutions.

"I can cut ribbons. I can marry people," he said. "But when it comes to policy, it goes to the City Council."

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