

# 'Maywood Machine' Shifts Back Into Gear

April 29, 2015



*Henderson Yarbrough*

Two years after Maywood voters ousted Henderson Yarbrough as mayor of the long-troubled western suburb, he's back on the village board, winning a trustee seat in the April 7 election.



### *Maywood Mayor Edwenna Perkins*

Whether this is a positive development depends on who's talking. Not surprisingly the current mayor, Edwenna Perkins – who defeated Yarbrough in 2013 and is part of an opposition or reform bloc – isn't terribly happy.

Henderson Yarbrough seems like a nice fella; he has a gentlemanly manner. But problems were pervasive under his rule. And critics viewed him as ineffectual, at best.

The village's finances on his watch were quite simply disastrous, with the police department at times not having enough money to gas up its squad cars. Not the greatest scenario considering Maywood's severe level of crime.

And that's just for starters.

[This is how we put things in perspective in a 2012 Chicago magazine piece:](#)

*“Maywood's financial record-keeping has been so poor in recent years, it's difficult to determine where all of the tax money ended up. Its police department, though small in size, has had staggering problems with corruption within the ranks . . . and development projects aimed at revitalizing the community's hollowed economy have routinely withered.”*

*“Presiding over the dysfunctional town is the political power couple of Maywood: Mayor Henderson Yarbrough and his wife . . .”*



*Cook County recorder of deeds Karen Yarbrough*

That'd be Karen Yarbrough, who was a state legislator at the time, a key ally of Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago.) She's now the Cook County

recorder of deeds, and remains Proviso Township's Democratic committeeman and a leader in the Illinois Democratic Party. She's considered a riser, with an eye on higher office. Her father once was Maywood's mayor, too.

We sometimes refer to the Yarbroughs' political operation as the "Maywood Machine."

The Chicago magazine article went on to say:

"They may not be solely to blame for the village's problems — which began decades ago, spurred in part by a manufacturing meltdown in the 1970s — but in many ways, the Yarbroughs seem more interested in keeping their family and political fortunes flush than in helping the 24,000 residents . . . ."

Ok, so with that as a backdrop, what spurred Henderson Yarbrough to return to the village board, although this time as one of six trustees?

"People asked me to run and they elected me," he told us in a recent interview, adding that during his time as Maywood mayor "things were good and getting better."

Eleven people ran for three trustee spots, and Henderson Yarbrough was the second top vote-getter, with 897 votes, according to the Cook County clerk's office.

"I knew I was going to be involved one way or another" in the community "so I decided to give it one more shot," the former mayor said. "Good decision, bad decision, we'll see."

So is this a stepping stone - as Perkins believes - so he can reclaim the mayor's office?

"No, no, no . . . I have no such intentions," Henderson Yarbrough said. "That's not my intention at all. It took a lot for me to say yes to this, you guys beat me up so bad."

([Click here](#) and type "Maywood" or "Yarbrough" into the search bar for the dozens of stories we've done over the last few years.)

Henderson Yarbrough said Maywood residents encouraged him to run for trustee,

adding, "I don't plan on moving, I want [Maywood] to be the best it can be."

He relayed that the same old issues remain - public safety and economic development "at the top of the list."

He's been viewed as a proxy for his politically powerful wife. Did she push him to run?

"No . . . as a matter of fact she stayed on the sidelines . . . I think she would have preferred me not to run," he said.

Karen Yarbrough explained to us: "It wasn't my idea, it was his idea . . . I told him I wouldn't oppose it, I'd be a good wife."

***This blog post was written and reported by the Better Government Association's Robert Herguth, who can be reached at [rherguth@bettergov.org](mailto:rherguth@bettergov.org) or (312) 821-9030.***

*Henderson Yarbrough image from MaywoodUnited.com.*

*Edwenna Perkins image from Maywood-IL.org.*

*Karen Yarbrough image from CookReporter.com.*