Angelle ends 24-year legacy as Carencro mayor

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CARENCRO — Tommy Angelle considers Carencro's transformation from town to city his greatest accomplishment during the 24 years he served as mayor.

He's not the only one. As friends, family and city officials gathered to honor Angelle after the City Council's meeting Monday night, his efforts to move Carencro from a township to a city were what everyone talked about.

"When Tommy started, this was a nice little town," said Lynn Guidry, city planner. "Now, it's a great city. You leave big shoes to fill."

Angelle, 56, dressed in a red blazer, patriotic tie, blue jeans and cowboy boots led his final meeting of the City Council. Periodically, he would shift his reading glasses from his nose to the top of his bald head, or sometimes, he'd rest them on the table. It's a habit that has lost him a few pairs of glasses during his administration, said Marie LeMaire, city clerk for the past 28 years. She helped solve the problem by offering an old pair of her large, round-framed trifocals for him to read with at his desk in city hall. "They stay on his desk," she laughed. "He wouldn't leave the office with those glasses on."

In 1974, Angelle began his political career as a council member. Since he took office as mayor in 1978, Carencro's population and economy have spurted under his leadership, said Lloyd Rochon, Carencro city manager.

Carencro has grown but still maintained its small-town attitude, said Arthur "Scooter" Robison, a longtime friend and 25-year Carencro resident.

The town has sprawled from its anchor at La. 182 to about 6,100 people calling it home. The historic district near city hall is untouched by franchises. A video store, small library and restaurant are among the few establishments on the street tucked inside wooden storefronts.

"Most of the people that have been here know each other and speak to each other," Robison said. "You can get things done in Carencro that you need to go through a lot of red tape if you lived in Lafayette."

Tommy Angelle has left a solid foundation for Brasseaux to build upon, said Charlotte S. Clavier, outgoing mayor pro tem.

That foundation includes Pelican Park, a 32-acre softball complex that attracts the nation's best teams for tournaments, renovations of sewage plants, upgrades in fire and police services, and the construction of City Hall. "His efforts may make him the city's most productive mayor," Rochon said.

"Tommy Angelle has left an indelible mark on the city of Carencro. It's my prediction that he'll go down as the best mayor that Carencro has ever had," Rochon said.

Now that Angelle has retired from his political role, people wonder if he'll decide to pursue another role in government. In 1999, Angelle ran an unsuccessful campaign for the Legislature against Rep. Clara Baudoin, D-Carencro. Monday he said he'd "wait and see" before deciding to run for Baudoin's seat next year.

While he closes one chapter of his life, the next includes Knot at Work, his 36-foot trawler. He said he recently took a trip into the Gulf of Mexico.

"I'd still be out there if I didn't have to come back for the meeting," he joked.

Robison said Angelle has been looking for the perfect boat for awhile and said he thought if his friend had a choice on what to do next in his life, it would be slowing down and traveling on Knot at Work for awhile.

"If he could get Dorothy to go with him," Robison laughed. "It's a very slow boat, which gives you an indication he doesn't want to go anywhere too fast."