

# Memo

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TO: City Council  
FROM: Mayor Stromberg  
DATE: October 11, 2017  
RE: Appointment of City Administrator

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John Karns was appointed Interim City Administrator, and confirmed by the Council, approximately 11 months ago. Interim appointees usually perform a caretaker function, avoiding change and difficult problems in order to provide an uneventful bridge between the previous and subsequent administrations.

John has been just the opposite. He set to work immediately to improve City government:

- Emphasized a culture of teamwork and open communication from the Leadership Team out into the entire organization.
- Tackled problems such as public dissatisfaction with the way Com Dev processed development projects.
- Created a management and supervisory skills development program for aspiring managers.
- Launched an annual Team Ashland program to give interested citizens a direct experience of the many aspects of City services, that is receiving enthusiastic approval both from the participants and the employees conducting the component sessions.
- Flexed the Emergency Shelter program to include extreme weather conditions beyond simply low temperatures.
- Strengthened already existing bonds with the community.
- Oversaw the selection process for three new Department Heads (Administrative Services, Public Works and Fire Chief) and elevated the HR Director to Department Head level.
- Helped produce a balanced budget for 2017-19 that absorbed an increased PERS assessment of \$1.1 million.

At the same time City staff supported, or is currently supporting, a number of important initiatives, including:

- The Climate Energy Action Plan
- Ashland Water Advisory Committee - 2
- City Hall Ad Hoc Committee
- Clean-up of the Railroad Property
- Winter Shelter with community partners
- Increasing police staffing



- The Council's "Strategic Management" process\*
- Revitalization of the Leadership Team\*

(\* to begin this fall)

Looking ahead, persistent problems with housing, maintaining order in public spaces, beautification and urban design of our commercial areas, making the community more resistant/resilient to wildfire, and preparing for further demands on the City's finances due to predicted PERS increases in our next two biennia will all put additional demands on City government as a whole.

It is in the context described above that I have decided to ask the Council to confirm the appointment of John Karns to the position of City Administrator through July, 2019 and to agree to begin the process of recruitment for his replacement early in January, 2019, so that she or he will take over once the new budget has been approved.

I want to make sure to preserve the cultural and management improvements John has put in place, keep his direction over on-going and developing projects and ensure the continuity of his leadership through the next biennial budget process.

John has also proposed to conduct an anonymous 360-degree feedback survey of the Council, Mayor, Dept Heads, second in command managers, a sample of rank and file employees and key community partners - to identify ways in which he can improve in performing his job.

I believe choosing John Karns as Interim City Administrator was a stroke of good fortune for our community, and I put forward this next step of his appointment to full City Administrator status for your consideration.

Respectfully,

John Stromberg  
Mayor

