



Office of Mayor Miro Weinberger

To: City Councilors
From: Mayor Miro Weinberger
Date: December 10, 2015
Re: Appointment of Fire Chief

I respectfully submit for your consideration and approval Fire Chief Steven Locke as the City's new Chief Engineer of the Burlington Fire Department (BFD), effective February 1, 2016. Chief Locke comes to the City of Burlington following more than 20 years of service with the Hartford, Vermont Fire Department, including six years as Fire Chief, three years as the President of the Vermont Career Fire Chiefs Association, and currently five months of experience serving as Interim Town Manager of Hartford. I am requesting City Council approval of this appointment at your December 21, 2015 meeting.

Extensive search for the next Fire Chief

Over the past several months, after Chief Seth Lasker's formal announcement in August of his intention to retire, the search for the next Fire Chief has been an important focus of my Administration. The extensive search process included:

- A series of meetings open to all members of the Burlington Fire Department, organized by shift during which input could be provided freely. This input, complemented by separate meetings with the Burlington Firefighters Association Local 3044 leadership and the Department command staff, contributed to my understanding of the Department's role and future needs.
- Posting the position locally, state-wide, and nationally in September, including advertising to diverse communities and supplemental recruitment efforts by my office.
- Reviewing of resumes of both in-state and out-of-state candidates and selecting multiple candidates for interviews by the following search committee, led by Chief of Staff Brian Lowe:

- Selene Colburn East District City Councilor
- Mike Curtin President, Burlington Firefighters Association, Local 3044
- Robert Gowans Fire Chief, Montpelier
- Susan Leonard Director, City of Burlington Human Resources
- Jake Perkinson Chair, Burlington Fire Commission
- Dawn LeBaron Vice President, Hospital Services, UVM Medical Center
- Brian Lowe Mayor's Chief of Staff
- Michael Sheeser Emergency Medicine Physician; BFD Medical Advisor
- Linda Sheehey Commissioner, Burlington Fire Commission

- The search committee interviewed six candidates and recommended four finalists. Each finalist met in person for an extended interview with the Mayor, Chief of Police, Mayor's Chief of Staff,

and Mayor's Communications & Projects Coordinator.

- Chief Locke also took part in follow up meetings with Fire Commission Chair Jake Perkinson, business and community leaders, the City's Diversity & Equity Core Team, Mayor's Office staff, and the Mayor.

Now, at the conclusion of this search process, I am confident that Chief Locke has the deep fire and emergency experience, history of leadership in a variety of roles, and fresh perspective that will benefit the Burlington Fire Department and City of Burlington, at a time when our Fire Department is evolving in response to changing technologies and demographics in our community.

Vast experience at all levels of fire services

Chief Locke began his career of service in fire and emergency response as a volunteer firefighter in North Hyde Park, Vermont at the age of 16. Chief Locke joined the Hartford Fire Department full-time in 1992, after six years of volunteer experience. He served for 16 years as a firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician and began his service as Chief in 2008. Chief Locke has served seven years as Fire Chief in Hartford, interrupted by additional leadership assignments at the town's request, and three years as the President of the Vermont Career Fire Chiefs Association.

A career marked by leadership success, steady response to crises, recognition from peers, and growing responsibility

During his successful career, Chief Locke has earned new responsibilities and repeatedly stepped into difficult leadership roles at times of community need. He became Chief of the Hartford Fire Department at age 38 and has served at different times as both President of the Professional Fire Fighters of Vermont and the President of the Vermont Career Fire Chiefs Association. Chief Locke also leads the only nationally accredited Fire Department in New England (one of approximately 200 nationwide) and was an instrumental player on the team of leaders that earned that accreditation in 2004 and maintained in 2009 and 2014. He also served as the Emergency Management Director during the Hurricane Irene response and recovery effort in Hartford, and has demonstrated exemplary managerial experience during his time there, including excellent grant writing expertise, creating and continually updating the Hartford Fire Department's strategic plan with the assistance of command staff and external stakeholder input, and installing a new computer aided dispatch software system. Hartford is the only fire agency in the state to use this technology.

Further, the Hartford community has turned to Chief Locke in times of need. Chief Locke was appointed to serve as the Interim Town Manager of Hartford after the resignation of the Town Manager in August 2015. During the past five months, Chief Locke has overseen the 99 employees of the Town of Hartford and will deliver the municipal budget he has crafted to the selectboard in January 2016. Earlier, in 2013, he served for one year as the town's Public Safety Director responsible for police, fire, and communications following a failed search for a new Police Chief (Chief Locke did not exercise any operational control over the Police Department during that time).

A data-driven, analytical approach

Chief Locke is a strong believer in the fire accreditation process and the benefits it brings to any given Fire Department, City, and community. He currently serves as a peer team leader on accreditation site visits and is committed to communities' successes through the accreditation process. In his time as Fire Chief in Hartford, he oversaw the development of a Department-wide strategic plan that included setting and achieving new metrics for improvement (including response time). Chief Locke also led the installation of a new computer aided dispatch software system that provides firefighters greater clarity on the location and situation of an emergency. Hartford is the only fire agency in the state to use this technology.

Experience delivering regional services and paramedicine

In his current role, Chief Locke has been responsible for the delivery of paramedicine services, a new service that Burlington has just begun offering and faces years of work to fully implement. Further, dispatch services are delivered regionally in the Upper Valley. Regional dispatch has long been discussed in the Burlington metropolitan area as an opportunity to improve operations and, over time, generate financial efficiencies, but has never been implemented. As Burlington Fire Chief, one of Locke's early assignments will be to review the history of regional dispatch and consider a new effort to implement it.

Moving forward

Further details of Chief Locke's extensive career can be found in his attached cover letter and resume. Following your confirmation of Chief Locke's appointment, I intend to place him at Step 7 of the Fire Chief pay scale for an annual compensation of \$101,180 in FY16. Chief Locke will begin his service to the City of Burlington on February 1, 2016.

Chief Locke is an innovator, an impressive leader in the fire service sector, and comes to Burlington with extensive experience in emergency management and fire accreditation. I am confident he will make an outstanding Fire Chief, will be a forward-thinking and trusted member of the City's leadership team, and will uphold the tremendous reputation of the Burlington Fire Department.

Thank you for your consideration.