

BURLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

PRESS RELEASE

December 21, 2016

BURLINGTON POLICE HIRES TO UNDERGO NEW EIGHT-WEEK PILOT ORIENTATION PROGRAM



The Burlington Police Department has hired three new officers as part of its plan to first reach its full authorization of 100 officers and then expand, via a federal police hiring grant, to 105 officers over the next two to three years.

Having immigrated to the United States from Uganda in his youth, **Ronald Kikayongo**, 22, comes to serve and protect Burlington by way of Worcester, Massachusetts. “Even though I don’t have a law enforcement background, I’ve come to Burlington because I’ve heard great things about the department and the city itself,” he said. Kikayongo has made his new home in St. Alban’s. A football player at Anna Maria College in Paxton, Massachusetts, Ronald was drawn to policing Vermont after graduation by a mentor who introduced him to Chief del Pozo during a visit to the state police academy in Pittsford.

Erin Bartle, 33, is originally from Morristown, New Jersey, having moved to South Hero from Virginia, where she spent several years in equestrian pursuits. “I was drawn to Burlington because of its unique mix of cultures and people,” she said. “I believe in the concept of community policing and am excited to become part of the living project that is Burlington.” A graduate of Centenary College in Hackettstown, New Jersey, with a bachelor’s in equestrian studies, Bartle gave Chief del Pozo an evasive smile when asked if she was going to first settle in and then attempt to start a mounted unit.

Kyle Yeh, 26, will police Burlington after four years as a police officer with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, where he performed patrol functions and served as a crime scene technician. “My wife attended Champlain College and she felt Burlington would be a good fit for us,” Yeh said. “I’m really looking forward to working in a small city with a New England feel to it, where I can see the impact I make as a police officer.” Yeh

holds a bachelor's degree from Westfield State University in Westfield, Massachusetts, and is of Chinese-American descent. He recently bought a home in Essex, Vermont with his wife.

Officer Yeh will laterally transfer into field training in Burlington from his prior police department. Kikayongo and Bartle will be attending the Vermont Police Academy in Pittsford, Vermont, in February, 2017. In the meantime, they will be piloting the department's first eight-week orientation program. In their run-up to the academy, new hires will work in the Records and Property sections, go on frequent ride-alongs with officers, enhance their physical fitness, and interface with the community in various ways. "Giving new recruits several weeks to acclimate to police culture and to learn about our work while becoming more fit and giving us a chance to observe their demeanor with the public can only stand to yield better officers," Chief del Pozo said. "We will be sure, by the end of eight weeks of orientation and observation, that we are sending the right cops to Pittsford, and these cops can be sure that they have made the right choice of profession. I'm excited to evaluate this pilot and see if it is something we will do for all new hires."