

Dear Madam President and Councilors,

I am writing to inform you that Chief Richard Braks of the Gardner Police Department has decided to retire from the City after 23 years of service. I'd like to thank Chief Braks for his years of dedicated service to the Department and the City and wish him well on his retirement and next endeavors.

The position will be posted later today on the City's website and on the Massachusetts Municipal Association's Mass Career's postings. Due to the specialized nature of this position, I have appointed a search committee to conduct the review and preliminary interview process for applicants for the position. This committee will review the resumes and applications received, select candidates for a first round of interviews, and then submit the top two or three candidates to my office for a final interview for selection.

This committee will be comprised of Human Resources Director Debra Pond, Retired Chief Vincent Alfano – who served as Gardner's Acting Chief for a time, Chief Richard Briggs of the Ashland Police Department, Chief Ralph LeBlanc of the Westminster Police Department, and Director Michael Moriarty of the Rutland Regional Emergency Communications Center.

Aside from general police work, the Gardner Police Department also oversees the City's Animal Control and Dispatch operations.

Whereas the Gardner Police Department oversees Animal Control operations for four communities – Gardner, Westminster, Ashburnham, and Hubbardston – I wanted to make sure the committee contained someone who brought that perspective to the table. This is why Chief LeBlanc from Westminster was asked to participate as one of our member communities.

Furthermore, the Gardner Dispatch Center is also an integral part of the department. This is why I asked Director Moriarty to join as he brings vital dispatch knowledge to the table, as both the director of one of the largest regional centers in the Commonwealth and the City's back up 9-1-1 provider should there ever be any outages or issues with our internal 9-1-1 system.

Once the Committee provides their two or three top candidates to my office, I will interview them each and make a decision on whom to appoint.

As is the case with all appointees-designate whom I have put forward, they will be given a 60-day temporary appointment to start. The reason I have done this with all of the Department Heads that I have appointed is that once an appointee – designate is confirmed by the City Council, they have a right to serve the full three-year term that is listed on their appointment certificate. However, the Code of the City of Gardner and all of our collective bargaining unit agreements state that when all non-appointed employees are hired, they must first serve a probationary period in their role to ensure they are a good fit for the position. The only way to do this for a Department Head appointed position is to do a temporary appointment to see how they do on the job first and then submit a full appointment to the City Council for approval. I have done this with all department heads whom I have appointed in order to remain in line with the spirit of the ordinances listed in the City Code.

Following a successful completion of the 60-day probationary period, a full appointment certificate for a three-year term will be submitted to the Council for review and confirmation.

As has been the practice with all other appointees, they will be given a confirmation hearing before the Appointments Committee and then sent to the full Council for consideration of a confirmation vote.

Once a temporary appointment certificate is signed for the candidate selected to be Chief, the position of Deputy Chief will be posted. The same committee will review those applicants with the new Chief joining in interviewing the final two candidates with me after the committee sends the finalists to my office.

The Public Safety Communications Director (Dispatch Director) position was filled last week. Mr. Richard Rossi, current Assistant Director of Public Health, applied for the Director Position and was selected. Mr. Rossi has previously worked as a Patrol Officer for the Southbridge and Auburn Police Departments. During this position, he also had to work to provide dispatch services when their dispatch center was understaffed. This is a position that is hired by the Police Chief and is not a mayoral appointment subject to City Council Confirmation.

This position was hired following a review of a panel made up of Human Resources Director Debra Pond, Police Lieutenant Nicholas Maroni, and Fire Chief Gregory Lagoy.

As further information on these topics come up, I will be sure to let you know.

Respectfully,

Mike Nicholson

Michael J. Nicholson, J.D.

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