

18 of 31 DOCUMENTS

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Ex-Bradbury official on Sierra Madre list

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SIERRA MADRE - A former Bradbury city manager is on the short list for Sierra Madre's top executive position, according to area officials.

Officials said Katie Wilson is a finalist for the city manager job.

Wilson, who is the director of land entitlement for Ames-Hawkes Holdings, LLC in San Diego, did not return phone calls seeking comment.

Sierra Madre City Council members have been searching for a replacement for former City Manager John Gillison since March. Gillison is now the deputy city manager for Rancho Cucamonga.

Beatrice LaPisto-Kirtley, a former mayor of Bradbury, would not publicly comment on Sierra Madre's job search but praised Wilson's two years as that city's manager.

"She was by far the most professional, the brightest city manager we ever had," said LaPisto-Kirtley, who retired from the council last year after more than two decades of service. "We weren't even aware of the things that we weren't doing - all the compliance issues - until Katie came along."

LaPisto-Kirtley said Wilson was the Bradbury City Council's unanimous choice for city manager.

That level of support is something that Sierra Madre Mayor Enid Joffe said she would like to have for whoever becomes the next city manager.

"As mayor, I would like a unanimous vote," she said. "I really don't feel that anyone would want to start out knowing only part of the council supported them."

Though Joffe would not provide the name of any candidates being considered, she confirmed that the council is "in the process of interviewing and vetting finalists."

On Wednesday night, council members met in closed session to discuss the city manager position, but no action was taken, Joffe said.

Even city managers appointed with the full support of their city councils are not guaranteed a long career.

In June, the Rosemead City Council fired City Manager Andrew Lazaretto, who was appointed by a unanimous

council vote in March 2006.

Lazaretto did not return two calls seeking comment.

Doug Johnson, a fellow at Claremont McKenna College's **Rose Institute** of State and Local Government, noted that the makeup of the Rosemead council changed after an election - and after Lazaretto was hired.

A newly elected council majority can often jeopardize the top executive's job security, he said.

City managers "tend to have generous severance agreements, because their lifespans tend to be pretty short," Johnson said.

In the case of Sierra Madre, a "very active political community," a single election could significantly change the council's policies, he added.

And though city managers are called upon to make objective decisions about city business, they often end up as "somewhat of a professional punching bag," Johnson said.

"Often times it's challenging because you have tugs and pulls from different interest groups," said Jack Lam, Rancho Cucamonga's city manager for nearly two decades.

"The duty of the city manager is to provide the best professional advice based on what he or she believes is in the best interest of the community," he said.

With that in mind, most city manager candidates would prefer having the full support of a council before accepting the job, officials said.

"No manager wants to come in on a split vote if they don't have to because they feel like they're under the gun from the beginning," Gillison said. "All it takes is one individual who isn't impressed by the candidate."

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