

The Hunterdon Review

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Clinton Twp. bids farewell to administrator, names Tewksbury administrator as replacement

By CLAIRE KNAPP Contributing Writer Mar 27, 2017

CLINTON TWP. – The Township Council bade a fond farewell to outgoing Township Administrator Marvin Joss and made the announcement of his replacement, Jess Landon, the current administrator of Tewksbury, at its Wednesday, March 22 meeting.

Landon's appointment is to be effective on or about Monday, May 8, to give his present employer time to fill his position. Landon was not present at the meeting.

The council bid a fond farewell to Joss who will be retiring on Friday, March 31, after 11 years of service. Two of the five member Township Council, Dan McTiernan and Chris D'Alleine, could not be at the meeting, but McTiernan participated by telephone, remaining connected throughout the meeting.

Mayor John Higgins presented Joss with a plaque on which a resolution had been engraved recognizing some of his many accomplishments. Among those noted was the creation of the municipal court shared services with other municipalities and the implementation of a plan that will ensure annual road repair programs.

Even a few former council members took the time to attend the meeting to express their thanks to Joss for helping them during their tenure.

"I just came because this is Marvin's last meeting," said former Mayor Kevin Cimei, adding the he could not have accomplished what he did as mayor without Joss' help.

"Marvin has a calming influence," said Cimei. "He has also been unique in thinking more along good business lines instead of political."

Former Councilman John Lazarus also congratulated Joss for his accomplishments and wished him a long, healthy, happy retirement.

"I've got to say I've been blessed," said Joss. "This township is so lucky to have people willing to work for the betterment of the township."

In Clinton Township, Landon will be a full-time administrator with an annual salary of \$132,000 for the remainder of 2017. He will also have a full benefits package in accordance with the township's policies as well as five weeks of vacation and four personal days each year.

Landon was employed as administrator in Tewksbury for 16 years and his current salary is \$128,000 a year. Landon said that the search for his replacement has begun, with an advertisement in the works for the New Jersey League of Municipalities.

Tewksbury Mayor Dana Desiderio confirmed that the Tewksbury Township Committee has already begun a search for a replacement for Landon, whose last day is Sunday, May 7.

"Beyond that, the township policy is not to make any comments on any personnel matters," Desiderio said. "We wish him well."

Councilman Brian Mullay and Township Attorney Kristine Hadinger recused themselves from the administrator appointment process stating they have conflicts of interest.

One former mayor, Nick Corcodilos, was not present during the meeting, but told the Hunterdon Review that this is "just not the way you fill the most important job in the township."

"They interviewed two candidates, both deemed unsuitable," Corcodilos said. "That means they recruited in the wrong places. Then they hired someone who is such a close friend of Councilman Mullay that Mullay had to recuse himself. No others were interviewed. That just doesn't pass the smell test."

"Mayor Higgins is a former Merck executive so he should know better. You can't hire the best administrator if you don't go out and find eight or ten excellent candidates who are all worth interviewing, from which to choose. If you need help, do what the school board does. Every time it hires a superintendent, it uses a professional search firm. You make sure you have several great candidates to choose from."

Corcodilos said that when he hired Joss in 2006, he interviewed almost a dozen strong candidates, after personally recruiting across the state, most of them highly recommended.

"Several people urged John (Higgins) to slow down, use a defensible process. You can't hire from a field of one and say you found us the best administrator you could. That's just poor management and bad governance," Corcodilos said.

When presenting Landon as the successful candidate, Higgins said the job had been posted with the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, a website favored by towns throughout New Jersey, and a number of applications had been received. The selection committee included himself, Joss, and McTiernan.