

Northfield names Llamas town administrator



• Andrea Llamas

Staff Photo/Max Marcus

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NORTHFIELD — Andrea Llamas will be Northfield's new town administrator, pending employment negotiations with the Selectboard.

Llamas has worked as a town administrator in Buckland for 11 years, and in several other Franklin County towns before that.

She was the Selectboard's favorite from a pool of three candidates chosen by a separate screening committee without the Selectboard's involvement. The other two top candidates were Shane O'Keefe and Glenn Smith, both of whom had about 30 years of experience in town management jobs, mostly in small New England towns. The interviews were held Monday morning at Town Hall.

The search process for a new town administrator was managed by Community Paradigm Associates, a Plymouth-based company that headhunts municipal employees. The process began in August, and included an initial public forum where residents gave input. Because the process

was managed by an outside company, the process was closed to the public (and to the Selectboard) until the final three candidates were chosen by the screening committee.

Of the three candidates, Llamas stood out to the Selectboard for her personable style and her knowledge of Franklin County.

“She came off to me as someone who does their homework,” said Selectboard member Julia Blythe. “She brought home the bacon for Buckland.”

Llamas is leaving her job in Buckland, because she felt it was time for a change, she said. Selectboard Chair Tracy Rogers mentioned that some Buckland Town Hall employees she knew were unhappy to be losing Llamas.

“I think Northfield is about to take off,” Llamas said. “I want to be a part of that.”

In their interviews, the Selectboard asked the candidates largely the same questions, touching on leadership style, familiarity with higher levels of government, regionalization and preservation of the town’s rural character.

Llamas described a collaborative approach to management, emphasizing the importance of maintaining relationships with Town Hall employees and with local businesses.

“I don’t feel like it’s a top-down approach so much as it’s a managing-of-a-team approach,” she said.

She also spoke about working through contentious, polarizing issues.

“You have to bring in some of the criticism ... and hear what they have to say,” she said.

The Selectboard also noted Llamas’ knowledge of town budgeting and Massachusetts laws.

Northfield has not had a full-time town administrator since Willie Morales was put on administrative leave in March. The interim Town Administrator Bernie Kubiak was hired in May and will stay on until the end of the year.

Bernie Lynch, principal of Community Paradigm Associates, said after the Selectboard made its decision Monday morning that the position would likely be filled within the week.

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