

Arlington Town administrator to begin June 1

Darren Marcy

May 20, 2020

Long after the position was first discussed and more than a year after it was first approved by voters, Arlington's new town administrator is due to begin work June 1.

During a special Select Board meeting May 11, the board voted 5-0 to offer the job to Nick Zaiac, a resident fellow at the R Street Institute, a conservative and libertarian think tank headquartered in Washington.

The board followed that up Monday, with a signed acceptance letter in hand, and got to work approving the purchase of a computer system and preparing an office in advance of Zaiac's arrival.

Zaiac will be paid \$68,500 as a full-time exempt employee of the town. He will have two weeks of paid time off and is eligible for the town's benefit package.

The town originally voted at town meeting 2019 to hire a part-time administrator at a salary of \$45,000, but struggled for a year to attract candidates for the position.

Many in town, including the Arlington Area Renewal Project, continued to advocate for a full-time position to attract quality candidates.

When voters at town meeting this year approved the full-time position, the town immediately started getting applicants.

But a last-minute scare had the Select Board scrambling. With two desirable finalists, including Zaiac, the board began checking references and verifying resumes, when suddenly one of the two took another job offer.

Several board members admitted they feared losing both and having to start from scratch, so they hurriedly completed their due diligence on Zaiac and after he checked out, quickly offered him the job.

He comes to Arlington from Washington, where he has been working on transportation and infrastructure issues for two years.

Previous positions include working as a fellow at the Independent Institute in Oakland, California where he contributed commentary on land use, housing and transportation regulation.

Before that he was a research fellow at George Mason University working on state and local issues, infrastructure and transportation issues.

He also spent four years working for the Cato Institute as a research and editorial assistant working on a broad range of topics including tax and budget policy, and served as a writer, editor and social media manager in a variety of capacities.

Zaiac has a bachelor's degree in economics and international relations from American University and a master's degree from George Mason University in economics.

Zaiac and his wife arrived in Arlington on May 16 and began their state-mandated 14-day quarantine.

Zaiac will be taking over from former Select Board chair Keith Squires, who has been helping the town in the transition as an interim administrator after losing his seat on the board during the town meeting elections.

Bykowski said he thought it would be a good idea to have Squires prepare a packet of need-to-know information that would help him right away.

"It would be worth having Keith start to put everything in a file that he thinks Nick needs to know," Bykowski said. "So that would really give him two weeks to get that packet ready to hand over to Nick on his first day on June 1."

Another thing that will be ready is his office, which will be spartan to begin, but the board agreed that Zaiac should be the one to determine what he needed once he gets in and acclimated.

The board approved the purchase of a computer package including an HP laptop, monitor, docking station and keyboard for \$1,891. They also approved an end point protection security software with a 10-computer license for \$293, which will protect the computer from malware, ransomware and viruses including when Zaiac works from home.

The board agreed to send a press release announcing Zaiac's hiring dated May 18 and send thank you notes to the search committee for their efforts.