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NEW MUNICIPAL MANAGER

Top staff members exit West Vancouver municipal hall

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The top two staff at the District of West Vancouver, including the chief administrative officer, have left their jobs and a third senior bureaucrat is on leave at the municipality, the North Shore News has learned.

The departures come as a third-party investigation is underway into a formal staff complaint alleging bullying and harassment by Mayor Mark Sager.

CAO Robert Bartlett abruptly left his job as top bureaucrat at the municipality last month. The municipality confirmed June 23 that “Robert Bartlett is no longer with the District of West Vancouver,” adding Sager “would like to thank Mr. Bartlett for his service to the community and wishes him well in his future endeavours.”

Bartlett had been CAO of the municipality for the past three years.

No reason was given for his sudden departure. In an interview, Sager said Bartlett’s departure was by mutual agreement.

Bartlett’s exit comes three months after the deputy CAO in West Van, Mark Chan, also abruptly left his position. In the case of Chan, who has worked for the municipality for about 15 years, no announcement was



Former CAO Robert Bartlett (left) has left his position and Scott Findlay (right) has been appointed new municipal manager at the District of West Vancouver, Mayor Mark Sager (centre) has announced.

DISTRICT OF WEST VANCOUVER

made about his departure and Sager declined to discuss it.

Both Bartlett and Chan declined to comment about their exits from the municipality.

A third senior staffer, Mark Panneton, director of legislative services, is currently on leave from his job.

The allegations against Sager in the staff complaint have not been proven.

Sager declined to comment on the existence of any human resources investigation happening at the municipality. “I’m not going to comment on malicious rumours,” he said. “This is so

inappropriate. It’s beyond belief.”

According to the municipality’s most recent Financial Information Act disclosures, Bartlett earned more than \$279,000 last year, while Chan earned more than \$232,000.

At a public council meeting June 26, Sager announced council has appointed Scott Findlay, a retired West Vancouver Police inspector who grew up in West Van and who has been manager of bylaws at the district for the past six months, as the new municipal manager. There was no recruitment process or search for a top administrator for the district.

Sager said Findlay had been

appointed to a six-month contract “which gives him an opportunity to ensure he likes the role and that he is fitting in and performing, as we are confident he will.”

In an interview last week, Sager said Findlay is well prepared for the role through many executive leadership roles during his career at the police department.

Council has opted to give Findlay the title municipal manager rather than CAO, because “It’s taking it back to the way things were when I was mayor before,” said Sager. “I think it just better suits our community.”

Sager said he’s heard overwhelming support for Findlay as council’s choice to head West Van’s public service.

“I think that when people recognize the outstanding talent we have in the municipality, and the truly outstanding individual who is assuming the leadership position of our staff, I think people will be thrilled,” he said.

Council was elected “to get things done at the municipality,” said Sager. “We were elected because there were problems. And it was well known. The majority of us ... wanted to see things improved. And I think our new municipal manager is the right person at the right time to lead things forward.”

After news of the top staffers’ departures was made public,

the union representing West Vancouver Blue Bus drivers and mechanics – which supported Sager in the last civic election – issued a statement supporting the mayor.

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 134 spokesman Geoff Devlin said the union, which represents about 150 drivers and mechanics, supports Sager’s efforts to “improve labour relations” in the municipality.

“We’re in support of the new municipal manager and the new mayor,” said Devlin, adding morale among employees the ATU represents has suffered in recent years.

The West Vancouver Municipal Employees Association also welcomed Findlay in a joint statement with the bus drivers’ union. Catalin Fota, business manager for the employees association union that represents about 750 employees, said he is hopeful the change will improve the labour climate at West Vancouver’s municipal hall.

“Communication with the previous CAO was very difficult,” he said.

West Vancouver is not unique in seeing senior staffers fired or quit and replaced in the wake of a change in political direction at municipal hall. Lions Bay, for instance, has also experienced staff turnover since the last municipal elections.

BACK-UP GENERATORS DELAYED

Power outages at Lions Gate Hospital result in surgery cancellations

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Intermittent power outages over a three-day period at Lions Gate Hospital resulted in 23 surgery cancellations in June.

The intermittent power failures at the hospital, the result of BC Hydro repairs, happened June 17 to 20.

According to Vancouver Coastal Health, a technical fault with electrical switches delayed the triggering of the hospital’s back-up power generators. As a result, 23 scheduled surgeries were postponed at Lions Gate. As of June 27, 16 of those surgeries had been rescheduled or completed, according to VCH.

Clinical staff are prioritizing providing

alternative dates for the remaining patients who were impacted by the incident, according to the health authority.

Those in charge at Lions Gate Hospital and technical experts have investigated what caused the power failure and the technical problem has now been fixed, according to VCH.

“Additional measures have also been

put in place to support continuity of safe, quality patient care in case of future power disruptions,” the health authority said in a statement, adding that all VCH hospital generators, which are supposed to provide back-up power in the event of a power outage, are routinely tested and maintained by the health authority’s facilities team in line with manufacturer’s guidelines.