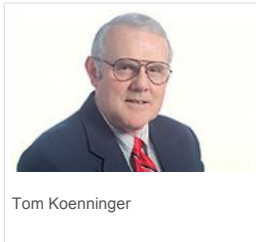


# Holmes clear choice for city manager

By Tom Koenninger

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Tom Koenninger

In the midst of the economic gloom, Vancouver's mayor and city council members should be congratulating themselves for a perfect alignment. They could — and should, in my view — position themselves to step into the city's future by promoting Eric Holmes to the city manager's job, succeeding Pat McDonnell, who will be departing on Nov. 1.

Holmes, 41, was hired as the city's economic development director in October 2007. He became assistant city manager on May 3, 2010.

McDonnell, who was given his highest performance rating this spring, became city manger in 2000.

Holmes has been involved in the city's major projects, including the waterfront redevelopment and the rejuvenation of downtown Vancouver and Esther Short Park.

Holmes's education and involvement in city improvement parallel the education and training of McDonnell. Holmes graduated from the University of Oregon with a bachelor's degree in planning and public policy. He earned a master's degree from Lewis and Clark College in public administration.

Holmes has worked in Clark County for 18 years. This includes being chief operating officer for MacKay & Sposito, a local and regional development firm. He worked in Battle Ground for five years as city manager.

Holmes is eager to become Vancouver's next city manager. That is what should happen, and such a transition is supported by McDonnell's career path.

Other city advantages: By promoting Holmes, the city has a knowledgeable person ready to go. If the search for a new city manager goes through a national process, it will lose six months and then it would require about a year for a new person to become knowledgeable about city-wide programs. A new person would have to study Vancouver's problems and its challenges.

The city, already strapped for budget funds, will save money — \$50,000 to \$60,000 — by promoting someone already on the job here. There is no need to go "outside" for the next city manager. Holmes already has earned his "wings" in city management, and is dedicated to carrying out the policies of the mayor and city council.

## Ample challenges ahead

There are plenty of subjects for Holmes and the city council to work out:

City budget: Get the city out of the financial doldrums and move forward on spending plans. Determine city needs for the next five years.

Launch Vancouver's largest project ever — along the Columbia River waterfront, 22 city blocks. "The city of Vancouver is about to become a waterfront town again," said Barry Cain of Gramor Development at the dedication a week ago today. Gramor will develop the site with several investors. Holmes, by the way, introduced U.S. Sen. Patty Murray D-Seattle, at the ceremony. The \$44.6 million project will bring a 30-to-1 return for public and private investors.

Working with private developers, the city will continue enhancing the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site to draw more local appeal and extend its historic offerings to national prominence.

The city manager must play a vital role in plans to replace the Interstate 5 Bridge.

Paving the way: Vancouver needs to work its way to a stronger future by repaving such downtown streets as Columbia and others. It must find a creative way to do that. An innovative, penny-pinching assistant city manager is awaiting the call.

Lesser projects: Turn open spaces into parks without spending much money. Build a strong volunteer force for parks through the power of neighborhoods.

The line is open to the next city manager. Holmes is talented and trained for these purposes.

Again, there is no need to go "outside" to find the next city manager. His name is Eric Holmes. Let's give him a chance to fly for the city of Vancouver.