

Saint Paul City Manager Retiring

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Audrey Carlsen/KUCB

Tuesday was the last day on the job for Saint Paul City Manager Linda Snow. She's leaving the Pribilof Island community after almost seven years, and is leaving Alaska to move closer to family in the Lower 48. She's worked as a city manager in McGrath, Petersburg, Kenai and Saint Paul over the past 28 years. She plans to leave the state in early September.

"I have to say, of all the jobs that I've had as city manager in the state of Alaska, this has been the most challenging job. It has also been the most rewarding job."

Snow said that the newness of Saint Paul's government presented her with unique challenges when she arrived. The city was incorporated in 1971 and didn't gain full independence until 1984, when the federal government finally turned over control of the island's fur seal industry. In 2006, when Snow arrived, the federal government was still working to clean up hazardous materials and repair buildings that they were legally required to bring up to code before leaving the island.

"It had just taken them so long to remove their presence from this island that the people here were beginning to, you know, doubt that they ever would."

But since then, things have changed. During Snow's time as manager, she helped settle a legal battle over land between the federal government and the city. She's overseen the creation of a small boat harbor and has negotiated with the island's Native village corporation, TDX, to provide wind power for the city. The corporation's three wind turbines will be connected to the city's power grid in the fall.

Snow says she feels good about stepping down, knowing so many big projects are nearing completion.

"The timing was just right. You know, I felt like I had done what I came to do."

There will still be plenty of work on hand for whoever steps in as her successor, including overseeing the replacement of the city's sewage outfall system and construction of new burn units at the landfill.

City Clerk Phyllis Swetzof says the city began the search for a new manager in July. Three finalists, all of whom have Alaska roots, will be flown in for interviews this month.

In the meantime, Swetzof will be filling in until the city finds a permanent replacement.