

Boro, City Approve Fisheries Analyst Contract

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

The city and borough entered the New Year without a fisheries advisor, but they won't be without one much longer. During its regular meeting last night the borough assembly approved a contract with Heather McCarty of McCarty and Associates for fisheries analyst consulting services.

The contract is split between the city and the borough and will send McCarty to various fisheries meetings, including those held by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council and Board of Fisheries. Borough Manager Bud Cassidy said he's pleased with the hiring process so far.

"RFP was done correctly. It was advertised the proper amount of time. Responses were timely received, opened and rated. The fisheries work group had a logical approach in interviewing Mrs. McCarty. The references were checked, business license was received. I'm pretty comfortable with the process."

The contract is for 2 years and includes \$5,000 a month plus reimbursable fees associated with travel. Cassidy said there is a 30 day out clause in the contract if there is some sort of break in the relationship.

Assemblywoman Chris Lynch co chairs the Fisheries Work Group and was part of the sub committee that made the hiring recommendation.

"I just want to say that this is our third year operating and the fisheries work group statewide has elevated themselves just due to our due diligence in keeping informed and following the issues that are required to keep our fishing community on the cutting edge and able make good decisions and good representation decisions. It's imperative that we keep that up by hiring this caliber of an analyst."

During a joint work session last week between the city council and borough assembly, a handful of community members raised concerns about McCarty having a possible conflict of interest with certain fisheries issues. McCarty has a lengthy background in various fish-related sectors, including commercial salmon fishing, aquaculture work and time as a lobbyist for the trawl industry. But Assemblyman Dave Kaplan said he supported the hire of McCarty and felt that anyone with ample knowledge of fish issues would have some sort of bias here and there.

"Mrs. McCarty was professionally vetted both on levels of her qualifications and levels on transparency. We can go on and on and on and on, two years, five years, ten years — we're not going to get a candidate that won't be perceived as being biased in one way or another. That's human nature. What we have right now is we need this position filled. We are one of the largest

fishing ports in the nation. It would be negligent, in my opinion, at this point in time if we didn't have a qualified fisheries analyst.

The assembly approved the contract with McCarty five to one with Assemblyman Mel Stephens voting against it. Stephens said he did not like the manner in which the contract came forward and felt it was irregularly dealt with.

The city council also approved the joint contract with McCarty during its special meeting on Tuesday.