

Holic proposes 5-member council

By GREG GILES NEWS EDITOR VENICE GONDOLIER

In a memo to city council members this week, Mayor John Holic announced he intends to ask city council to consider changing its composition from seven to five members.

It's "in keeping with the streamlining, economizing and downsizing recommendation of most of our advisory boards," Holic said.

He also wants to change the term of office from three years to four years to coincide with even-numbered election years. The election cycle would be staggered, so in one election two seats would be open, while the next election would have three seats open. Both would occur on the same cycle as national elections to eliminate the need for off-cycle elections.

"In theory, we would spend less time on topics as we would not have seven people talking to the topic," Holic said.

He estimates the city would see a 28 percent reduction in salary and benefits for council members.

"North Port, city of Sarasota and Sarasota County — all councils that represent a larger constituency than that of the city of Venice do so with five-person councils instead of seven-person councils," Holic said.

On Tuesday, Holic penned another memo to council members announcing he will seek consensus to make permanent Nancy Woodley's appointment as city manager. She was the city engineer until former City Manager Isaac Turner came on board two years ago, at which time she was promoted to assistant city manager. Woodley was made acting city manager last week and given a 5 percent raise.

"Philosophically, Dr. Woodley's approach to management is similar to mine," Holic wrote, "yet she maintains the ability to express her own opinions instead of offering rubber-stamp ideas. Dr. Woodley will be relying more heavily on department heads assuming responsibility for their decisions and actions and will be exercising far less micro-management."

He called Woodley a proven leader and "known entity" with previous experience as acting city manager.

"Her appointment will convey a positive message to the employees of Venice that it is possible to be promoted from within," he wrote. "Successful negotiations with Woodley will assure a seamless transition for our city."

Woodley's appointment would fill a major void in leadership in the city, which is also undergoing a search to fill the position of police chief.

On Monday, a selection committee made the second cut from a list of almost 300 applicants for the position of police chief, down to 10. Still in the running are North Port Acting City Manager and Police Chief Terry Lewis and Venice Police Department Capt. Tom McNulty. Rounding out the top 10 finalists are: Eugenio Bernal, deputy chief of Orlando Police Department; Dwayne Flournoy, a major in the Hallandale Beach Police Department; Mark Lowe, current police chief in Republic, Mo.; Michael Mills, assistant chief in the South Miami Police Department; Paul O'Connell, district chief in Broward County Sheriff's Office; Sal Ruggiero, a major in the Tampa Police Department; and Mark Tenunis, a major in the Clearwater Police Department. William Tokajer withdrew his application as he has a conditional offer with the Longboat Key Police Department.

The committee will cull the list further in interviews scheduled for March 17, before presenting the top three to five candidates to Woodley for a second round of interviews, scheduled for March 30.

Also on Monday, Vincent LaPorta took over as building and code enforcement director, a position left vacant for much of last year as a cost-saving measure.

LaPorta spent the last 25 years in the Charlotte County building department, serving the last 10 years as deputy building official. He worked his way up from electrical inspector to inspections supervisor and eventually acting building review and inspections division manager, before becoming deputy building official.

E-mail: ggiles@venicegondolier.com