

Framingham: Petrini, Kelley picked for new city jobs

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FRAMINGHAM — Two leading figures in Framingham's former town government got a vote of confidence from Mayor Yvonne Spicer last week, securing new roles in her administration.

Spicer has appointed longtime Town Counsel Chris Petrini to the job of city solicitor, keeping him in place as the municipality's head lawyer.

Spicer also tapped Mary Ellen Kelley, the former chief financial officer, for the newly-created role of director of administration and finance. The job, created under Framingham's new city charter, will keep Kelley at the helm of the city's financial operations.

"I am pleased that Mr. Petrini and Ms. Kelley will continue to provide excellent service (to) the City of Framingham," Spicer said in an announcement, "especially with their knowledge and history in Framingham."

The appointments, announced by the mayor on Friday, are not required to be approved by the City Council, according to the mayor's office. Under the charter, the mayor has the authority to pick a city lawyer, finance director and chief operating officer without additional review by the legislative branch.

The city solicitor and director of administration and finance will serve "coterminous" with the mayor, meaning they'll stay in place throughout the mayor's tenure in office.

Petrini, a graduate of the Duke University School of Law, has served as Framingham's town counsel since 2001. Before starting his own practice, Petrini was a partner at the Boston law firm Conn Kavanaugh Rosenthal Peish & Ford.

Petrini also works as special counsel for other Massachusetts municipalities, focusing on cases involving labor and public construction disputes, according to information available on his firm's website.

Prior to being hired by the town, Petrini was a member and former chairman of the Framingham School Committee and the Framingham Board of Selectmen.

Selectmen voted unanimously in 2016 to renew a three-year contract for legal services with his firm, Petrini & Associates. Board members praised the firm's work at the time, saying Petrini and his staff have demonstrated a deep knowledge of municipal law and formed good relationships with residents.

"Chris in particular has done great service for the town," Selectmen Laurie Lee said. "His strong contracts are always written with the town in mind."

Before Framingham's transformation from town to city was set in motion, its contract with Petrini & Associates was due to remain in effect through June 2019. The annual fee the community pays to keep the firm on retainer was set to rise to \$250,000 in the coming fiscal year. Under the contract, hourly wages paid to the firm range from \$200 per hour for work by junior associates to \$220 per hour for partners and senior lawyers.

Among other responsibilities, the law firm is paid to provide legal opinions, litigate civil cases and field questions from city officials, boards and committees.

Spicer's announcement did not detail how much Petrini will be paid in his new role, or touch on the future structure of the city's legal agreements with his firm.

Also missing from the announcement were details of Kelley's terms of employment with the city. As CFO, Kelley earned a little more than \$140,000 during the 2016 calendar year, according to the most recent payroll records available from the city.

She was reappointed in 2016 to continue serving as CFO through the close of 2017, when the new city government took power.

According to an announcement from the mayor's office, Kelley has 30 years' experience in government finance, and has served as CFO for 12 years. She holds an MBA from the University of Massachusetts and certificates from UMass and Suffolk University. Before being hired in Framingham, Kelley was the chief financial officer for the state Registry of Motor Vehicles, according to the mayor.

As head of the Finance Division, Kelley oversaw formation of the annual budget, formed investment strategies and directed all accounting, audit, budgeting, purchasing, treasury and collection and property assessment functions in town, according to the announcement.

Kelley will have the same duties in her new position, as well as the added responsibility of managing technology services, according to the mayor.

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