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New faces planning a meet and greet at solid waste district

By Keith Whitcomb Jr. Staff Writer

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Mark Shea, district manager at the Rutland County Solid Waste District, is shown in his office. He is one of several recent arrivals at the district.

Keith Whitcomb / Staff Photo

With a new manager and several new staff members, the local solid waste district is hoping to embrace change.

“I think you’re going to always have change, and it’s how you cope with that change,” said Mark Shea, district manager at the Rutland County Solid Waste District, in a Friday interview. “It’s not a boogeyman that’s going to come and get you. Change is part of life.”

Shea started his job at the district in September. Also, the district has a new Waste Reduction Program coordinator, Jenna Robles, and a new treasurer, Gregory Giles. It’s also moved outreach coordinator, Carl Diethelm up to full-time, as the district plans to do more with education and media.

Shea was most recently an interim town manager in Gorham, New Hampshire. Before that, he’d been town manager in Castleton until he resigned in 2017. Shea said he was also the town administrator in Readsboro for a while prior to that.

Shea said he’d planned to retire, but his predecessor at the solid waste district, Jim O’Gorman, suggested he apply for the job.

“There’s lots of things I think I can bring to the organization,” said Shea. He’d like to spruce up the facility at 1 Smith Road, do more with public outreach, namely through social media, make using the transfer station easier, and develop an online permit registration system. He said right now it takes the district two months of stuffing envelopes to send out renewal notices, which could be done faster and more cost-effectively online.

To introduce himself and the new staff members to local waste haulers, the district has organized a dinner to be held from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday at the GMP Energy Innovation Center at 66 Merchant’s Row. Those interested in attending should RSVP with Diethelm by calling 775-7209 or email carld@rcswd.com.

Robles said Friday she didn't expect to be in the world of waste management when she moved to Vermont in June, but always had an interest in it. Robles said she previously lived in Colorado, near Denver and Fort Collins, and came to Vermont with her husband to start their family.

She chose carefully.

"Obviously, I'm a numbers person, so I ranked all of the states based off of crime rates, cost of living, infrastructure, all kinds of stuff, overall well-being, they have it all online, mental health scores, and eliminated the bottom results," she said. "Right now, I think Vermont is listed as No. 4 in places to raise a family. We have a little one, almost 5 months old, and you guys had great health care, quality of the hospitals, I was pregnant when I moved here, so that was important."

Her husband works remotely, and they initially sought to take advantage of the state's widely known remote worker program which offers monetary incentives for remote workers to come and live in Vermont.

"They're very rigid in their requirements," she said. "The corporate company you work for has to maintain taxes in Vermont, and the company he works for didn't have it and didn't want to establish taxes in Vermont, so he actually switched to be a 1099 employee to make things work out, and you can not be a 1099 employee to get the remote worker program."

The couple looked all over Vermont for a place to settle before choosing Rutland.

"I think what got us into Rutland was the downtown strip," she said. "We liked the downtown area, we went to the farmers' market here whenever we visited, just the community and the way things were looking, we liked it a lot."

In Colorado, she worked for a sheriff's department doing program coordination, setting prisoners up with educational opportunities and mental health services.

"There are a lot of things we have our eyes on. I feel like I'm in an analysis stage to where I'm seeing where there are opportunities to do cool new things, and there's a lot," she said of her new job. "The recycling market is going in a very interesting direction. We are definitely going to have to figure out how we can take things and recycle them in the most economical and feasible ways. There's going to be a whole lot of new things on the horizon."

Giles wasn't available for an interview Friday, but according to Shea, he has a strong background in auditing municipalities and financial institutions, tax returns, risk management and compliance.

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