

Does Las Cruces have a new city manager?

Steve Ramirez, Las Cruces Sun-News 8:27 p.m. MDT September 19, 2016



(Photo: Courtesy)

LAS CRUCES - According to a city news release, the Las Cruces City Council on Monday selected Stuart Ed of El Paso as the new city manager. Some councilors say otherwise, and that the decision is not final.

In a news release sent Monday afternoon, the city said the council's decision resulted from follow-up interviews with Ed and Daniel Biles, deputy manager-infrastructure of Jefferson County, Alabama. Ed and Biles participated in video conference interviews Monday morning conducted in closed session at Las Cruces City Hall.

Councilor Gill Sorg said there was consensus among council members to offer the job to Ed during the closed session. But he emphasized a final decision on the city manager won't be made until the council's next regularly scheduled meeting Oct. 3.

"It was a consensus more or less," Sorg said. "But it's not official until it's done in open session."

Mayor Pro Tem Greg Smith was emphatic that neither a vote, nor an offer, was made by the council to Ed.

"We have two very strong candidates and we will be voting on Oct. 3," Smith said.

Smith denied that any decision had been made during the closed session, but said based on the comments made by the council during the meeting, "we can make an assumption that Mr. Ed" would be chosen.

"There is strong support for Ed and he might very well have the vote on Oct. 3," Smith said. "But we haven't voted yet."

Susan Boe, director of the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government, said she is concerned with the information stated in the city news release.

"This certainly reads like a decision or action to me," said Boe, after reading the release. "... It's a final decision to make an offer. It should have been made in open session."

The release noted a third candidate — David Dollahon, assistant Las Cruces city manager and chief administrative officer for city government. Although Dollahon applied for the position, he was not interviewed by the council.

Ed and Biles interviewed in person with city council in Las Cruces on Sept. 7. Those interviews were followed by a meet-and-greet with the public that evening.

Ed's start date is subject to the terms and conditions of an employment contract to be negotiated, the city reported in its news release. City council has indicated it is interested in an initial two-year contract that includes biannual evaluations, according to the release.

Mayor Ken Miyagishima said Monday the annual salary the council will negotiate will not exceed \$189,900.

"That would be the maximum on the high end," Miyagishima said.

The city reported Ed most recently served as president/CEO of Goodwill Industries of El Paso. [Ed's LinkedIn account \(https://www.linkedin.com/in/stuart-ed-0a01028\)](https://www.linkedin.com/in/stuart-ed-0a01028) noted, and his [résumé \(http://www.las-cruces.org/~media/bf03deaf4bbb4c90a4633d6a29d4de08.ashx\)](http://www.las-cruces.org/~media/bf03deaf4bbb4c90a4633d6a29d4de08.ashx) also showed, that he left Goodwill in July and has been consulting with El Paso Independent School District and its engineering and construction department since August.

He has also worked with the city of El Paso Mass Transit Department for four years and the community development department for nearly five years.

Other professional experience includes service in the United States Army where he achieved the rank of captain.

Ed received his master of public administration degree from New Mexico State University in 2002 and his Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from the University of Arizona in 1984.

Miyagishima said in the news release, "The city council and I are very pleased and confident with the selection of Stuart Ed as the new city manager. He brings a wealth of diverse professional experience that will help Las Cruces continue in the positive direction the council has established. We believe he is a good fit for the council and the community, and we look forward to working with him."

After the city's news release had been issued, Miyagishima added, "It was a hard decision. Both guys were very good. ... But (Ed) was hitting on all cylinders. He really impressed me."

The new city manager will have to reside within Las Cruces city limits. That stipulation is included in the [Las Cruces City Charter \(http://www.las-cruces.org/~media/lcpublicwebdev2/site%20documents/article%20documents/city%20clerk/clccharterweb_redacted-1.ashx\)](http://www.las-cruces.org/~media/lcpublicwebdev2/site%20documents/article%20documents/city%20clerk/clccharterweb_redacted-1.ashx).

If a contract can be negotiated, and a majority of the council votes to hire Ed, he would replace Robert Garza, who retired May 27. Assistant City Manager and Chief Operating Officer Daniel Avila served as interim city manager for three months following Garza's departure. Dollahon is currently serving as city manager on an interim basis for three months.

The city manager is the sole employee of the city council, overseeing the day-to-day management of city government, which includes a \$374.5 million annual budget, and 1,366 full-time employees, according to the release.

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