

Wilson tapped as new City Manager for Columbia

Written by Staff Writer

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Columbia City Council has voted to approve an employment contract with Teresa Wilson for the position of City Manager. The announcement was made Tuesday during the City Council meeting. The position comes with a salary of \$190,000 a year, along with a car.

Wilson's hiring was approved in a 4-2 vote. Council members Moe Baddourah and Leona Plough voted against the hiring. They contended that Wilson, 38, who had never been a city manager elsewhere, lacked the experience to be manager of the state's capital city. Baddourah said he could not support the contract because Wilson was going to get a salary substantially higher than that of the far more experienced current city manager Steve Gantt, who makes \$175,000 a year.

But Mayor Steve Benjamin is most confident in Wilson, stating, "The next step in transforming Columbia into a truly world-class city hinges on our ability to create high-paying jobs, support strong communities and build new partnerships with our regional neighbors. Ms. Wilson has demonstrated not only a remarkable ability in those critical areas but a clear understanding of our vision for this city's future and I am confident that she will exceed our highest expectations as City Manager."

Teresa Wilson is a Columbia native and is an honor graduate from Irmo High School. She is also a graduate of the University of South Carolina's Honors College and the University of South Carolina's School of Law. She previously held the position as the City of Columbia's Assistant City Manager for Community Programs, Economic Development and Government Services. "I am honored by the opportunity to serve and I am looking forward to working with all of our dedicated employees to further the growth and development of our city" said Ms. Wilson.

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"Many thanks to Mayor Benjamin and City Council for placing their vote of confidence in me."

Ms. Wilson's accomplishments as Assistant City Manager include:

- Transforming city's struggling Community Development department into a model organization winning the 2012 John A Sasso National Community Development Week Award.
- Reducing the Commercial Revolving Loan Fund's default rate from 29% to 4%.
- Leading the rebirth of Downtown with 22 new businesses locating to Main Street since June 2011.
- Implementing the Façade Grant program which leveraged \$425,000 in federal CDBG funds to create over \$6 million in private downtown investment.
- Supplementing vital services like public safety with nearly \$60 million dollars in grant funds.

A total of 27 candidates applied for the position and the selected candidate was chosen from a group of 5 finalists.