

MIDDLETOWN

Township manager quits for Florida post

Richard Gestrich is leaving, forcing the township to find its third manager in four years.

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STAFF WRITER

Middletown could be looking for a new township manager soon as Richard Gestrich has been hired to be the new city manager in Oviedo, Fla.

An article in the Orlando Sentinel Wednesday said Gestrich, the manager in Middletown for a little more than two years, was picked at a Tuesday night meeting by the Oviedo City Council to be that municipality's new manager.

The newspaper was unsuccessful in its attempts to reach Gestrich, 54, for comment Thursday.

Also, the matter might not be completely settled in Oviedo, according to the Sentinel article. There is some controversy involving some other candidates for the job that might have to be settled in a special meeting, it said.

But interim Oviedo Manager Gene Miller said he didn't think there was any controversy that would prevent Gestrich from taking over in the city. He said Gestrich has accepted the job pending successful negotiation of an employment agreement. City officials are negotiating an agreement with Gestrich by phone and his tentative starting date is July 14, Miller said.

The advertised salary range for the Oviedo job is \$120,000 to \$170,000 a year and Miller guessed that Gestrich would end up somewhere about midway between those two figures. He is making \$117,000 a year in Middletown.

"Rich had said he was being actively pursued by other municipalities but I didn't know he had taken this job," said Middletown Supervisor Jasper Caro. "I know he had been taking days off here and there and doing interviews. I just figured that somebody with his background and knowledge as a township manager would be getting offers."

Gestrich has been in the running for several manager jobs in Florida recently, as detailed in a March 13 article in the newspaper. In that article, Gestrich said he was not dissatisfied in Middletown but was simply pursuing attractive job opportunities with larger salaries.

He is no stranger to the Sunshine State. He was manager in Jupiter Island, Fla., for one year before coming to Middletown. Prior to Jupiter Island, Gestrich was Upper Makefield's manager for 22 years.

Oviedo, about 25 miles northeast of Orlando, has a population of 34,000, more than 10,000 fewer than Middletown's 44,141. If Gestrich completes the deal there, Middletown will be looking for its third manager since John Burke resigned in 2004.

Assistant Manager Frank Farry has resigned over issues with his candidacy for state representative. His resignation is effective June 7.

Caro is not looking forward to another manager search.

"Rich is a good manager who seems to be able to handle any situation," he said. "It's very, very troublesome we can't hang on to a manager. It's not an easy task to go out and select another one. It takes a lot of work."

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Gestrich