

**Municipality of Bethel Park  
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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Bethel Park Municipality Hires New Manager**

*Bethel Park, PA* -- Bethel Park Municipal Council hired retired Army Lieutenant Colonel Laurence Christian as the new municipal manager at the Monday, May 13<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting. He'll begin work on Monday, July 1.

Christian, age 48, comes from the Office of the City Manager in Columbus, GA where he served as a fellow through the Veterans Local Government Management Fellowship Program since 2018. His background includes a 24-year military career in the US Army where he most recently served as deputy commander/chief of staff at one of the Brigades on Fort Benning, GA.

"We were very impressed with Laurence's background, knowledge and leadership experience and believe he will be a good fit for Bethel Park," said Bethel Park Municipal Council President Timothy Moury. "We also found him to have outstanding management and interpersonal skills. appreciated his thought process in handling difficult situations, and we were impressed with the extent of research he conducted on our community."

Christian knew back in 2003 that he wanted to put his years of experience to use in the field of local government.

"In 2003, after the invasion of Iraq, I was involved with a variety of specialized teams, and one, a Civil Affairs Team (*part of Special Ops Forces*), included someone who also worked as a city manager. He explained his job, and that set the seed for me," said Christian. "So, for the last 16 years, I was fortunate enough to benefit from unique assignments that provided the skills to do this job because I knew I wanted to work in the field of public administration post-Army. In fact, the skill sets are very similar between the two fields."

Some of Christian's career highlights include: overseeing between three to five capital improvement projects (*referred to as Sustainment Renovation and Modernization*) simultaneously in the Army ranging from

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\$35-42 million each where he was the direct liaison to the end user (*his brigade*); directing a 65-person staff; managing over \$500 million in infrastructure and equipment; and representing Defense Department officials at community events.

At the Office of the City Manager, Christian crafted a comprehensive plan for a dozen projects and assisted in the development and implementation of system controls for the clerk of council position there.

“For the capital improvements project list, we researched capital projects, both completed and ongoing, over the past 20 years by reviewing meeting minutes and agendas and tying them in with financial statements to create a document offering the city manager there a better visualization of what’s been completed and what is currently in progress,” added Christian.

Christian began his career with a strong interest in the military as a young man.

As a teenager, Christian knew he wanted to be a soldier and once his brother joined the Army, that “fueled his fire.”

“He and I served alongside one another for many years at different ranks and that helped guide me into a career and a life in the Army,” said Christian, who first served as an executive officer in Fort Jackson, SC and later as a deputy chief of operations, current operations in Kabul, Afghanistan prior to his position in Fort Benning.

Now, his transition into public administration feels very natural.

“I’ve been focusing my efforts and training for several years into making this transition,” he said.

In fact, he took the initiative through “The Career Skills Program” offered by the Army to be part of the Veterans Local Government Management Fellowship to make the transition to public service.

“During the last six months of active duty, with commander approval, a soldier can transition to the public or private sector to complete an internship showcasing how his or her training and skills are transferable to the civilian side,” said Christian. “The Veterans Local Government Management Fellowship was created in Colorado but not in Georgia; so, I worked with officials in Georgia to establish it there through the ‘Soldier for Life Program’ opening the door for others to transfer from the military to public service as well.”

Later according to Christian, the ICMA (*International City Management Association*) took control of the program and hired a program manager to run it.

“I recently spoke at the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia about this program and really what it could mean to local government to have an influx of veterans making the transition into public service,” he said.

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Christian and his family targeted a move to Pennsylvania to be closer to family, and Bethel Park was top on his list of desired locations.

“As soon as I applied to Bethel Park, I knew this place was special; my father-in-law and I spent a good amount of time learning the area; and I thought, this is it, this is where I want to raise a family!” said Christian.

And, as the new manager, he’s eager to hit the ground running.

“I’ve done a lot of research on the area and I’m aware of the challenges faced by the Municipality including the recent flooding,” he said. “I love the comprehensive plan under development and am looking forward to working with that and seeing it come to fruition and encouraging the residents to offer input. I’m also aware that there’s a call for keeping greenspace in the community, so I’ll be focused on that as well.”

Once in the area, Christian plans on being very active in veterans’ programs helping those who’ve served our country.

“So many have served our country, and I would like to be involved in programs that benefit our veteran population,” he said. “I also will continue to speak on the Veterans Local Government Management Fellowship Program...as I am passionate about that as well.”

Christian holds a bachelor’s in social science from Campbell University and a master’s in administration/general administration from Central Michigan University. He has completed the Pennsylvania Municipal Administration Training Certification, and holds the ICMA Local Government Certification.

Christian, his wife Anne Marie, and three children, ages, 2, 5 and 7, are looking forward to being active community members.

“We feel truly blessed for being selected and I’ll do everything in my power to elevate the level of service for the citizens,” said Christian.

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**(Photos Attached)**