

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

City officials and the owner of RHD, the firm managing Imperial’s senior care facilities, all expressed surprise this week at the abrupt resignation of administrator Melissa Larson.

Larson, who served as administrator of the Imperial Manor and Parkview/Heights since August, alerted Rural Health Development (RHD) by email Saturday afternoon that she would not be at work Monday.

Ron Ross, owner of RHD, was at Monday’s city council meeting and said he then alerted City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland soon after.

Saying he felt “awkward” with such short notice of the resignation, Ross apologized at Monday’s meeting on behalf of RHD.

“I can assure the next candidate we talk to, one of the biggest deciding factors we will have is longevity,” Ross said.

He said his firm will vet future candidates very strongly.

Larson was the fourth administrator at the Manor and Parkview/Heights since August 2010.

Ross said it was his understanding that Larson has taken a job in another community, reportedly Stanton, Neb., but RHD was not contacted for references in her application there.

“It was a total surprise,” he said.

Employees at the Manor and Parkview/Heights got a text Monday morning about her decision, Ross said.

Ross added that he holds an administrative license and was in Imperial Monday to assume that role.

He said he met with employees and visited with as many residents as possible Monday after he arrived about the resignation.

“Job one is to protect the facility and be in compliance,” he said.

Mike Harris, who has assumed the role of administrator in between administrative hirings in the past, will return once again as administrator until the next one is hired.

Ross said they completed the necessary paperwork later Monday for Harris to come on board as administrator.

They expect it will be 30 to 60 days before a new administrator is hired.

Mayor Dwight Coleman said it was quite a shock to receive the news, as well, adding that consistency is important.

The resignation also came as a surprise because RHD and the city were considering a \$12,000 annual raise to keep Larson here, and she had verbally given a three-year commitment. She had hinted that she was having difficulty selling her home in northeast Nebraska and in meeting her expenses here.

According to Leyland, RHD had offered her the \$1,000 month raise if the city would pay half of it. The salary item was on Monday’s council agenda but became moot with her resignation.

Ross said he does not see the Imperial facility as the problem with such a high turnover in administrators.

“For whatever reason, it’s them,” he said.

Ross said Larson was well-liked at the facilities here.

Ideally, if there was someone in the Imperial area who enjoys the elderly and has some management skills, Ross said, “We’d be willing to work with them” in becoming an

administrator.

For 2013-14, the city budgeted \$123,325 for RHD's management services at the senior care facilities. As part of that fee, RHD hires and pays the administrator.

The balance of Monday's city council meeting will be covered in a story next week.