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EDUCATION LOCAL NEWS

Haines superintendent resigns after seven years

Roy Getchell said he'll be leaving his post at the end of the school year

by **Rashah McChesney - Chilkat Valley News**

October 8, 2024

Haines School District Superintendent Roy Getchell is leaving his post at the end of the school year. He told the school board of his plans on Tuesday evening.

Getchell was hired in Feb. 2018, and by the time he leaves will have been with the district for seven years. He brought a level of stability to a position that had been in flux.

“When I came in, I think I was the sixth superintendent in six years,” he said.

According to a school board media release, his last day will be June 30, 2025.

Getchell, who was named Alaska Superintendent of the Year in 2023 by the Alaska Council of School Administrators, described his move to Haines as an opportunity to fulfill a lifelong goal.

“My wife and I were going to move here when I was younger and it didn’t work out,” he said. “I wasn’t dying to be a superintendent. But I knew I wanted to live in Alaska and Haines needed a superintendent, I had the certification and it was a way to make that work.”

He said the school board took a chance on hiring him.

"Through that, my girls got a hometown. They got an experience of a lifetime that can't be replicated. My wife had multiple years of students she was able to watch grow up," he said. "And I got to be a superintendent and leave a mark and have a mark made on me in a good way in Haines that is something that I'll never be able to repay."

The school board will start the process of hiring a new superintendent in the next few weeks, according to its media release.

Getchell said he is not leaving because of his salary or dissatisfaction with the district, rather that he'll be 56 soon. He joked that it's finally time to start thinking about his retirement.

"It's purely about, you know, needing to think about things responsible – for once in my life," he said. "I wouldn't trade ... my international experience, moving to different places, coming here. But, I could be retired now."

He has family in Colorado, and a defined benefit retirement program.

"It means that the more years that I teach within that system, the greater my retirement is," he said. "I really need that for [my wife's] retirement as well. I don't want to be a burden on our kids."

Getchell struggled to maintain his composure as he talked about his time in Haines.

"This has been a challenge. I would warn anybody – in a good way – that the responsibilities here are no less than a district 100 times its size. In fact, you feel it, I think even more so, because you know names, you know people, and you can see the impact of every decision that's made here. he said. "It's just been such an awesome, unreplicable experience that I wish I could live ten times."

Author



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Alaska Marine Highway System 'going the wrong direction' on staffing, director says

Iris Samuels : 7-8 minutes



The Alaska Marine Highway ferry Kennicott is docked in Sitka on February 24, 2024. (Marc Lester / ADN)

Alaska's ferry service will not offer the popular cross-gulf sailings between Southeast Alaska and Southcentral Alaska for the fourth year running due to a staffing shortage, director Craig Tornga told state lawmakers.

Roughly 24% of the positions in the Alaska Marine Highway System are vacant, and the rate is highest among the positions that require most training. Among wheelhouse positions, the vacancy rate is above 30%.

To operate the cross-gulf route, popular among families moving to the state and independent travelers looking to explore Alaska without driving through Canada, the system requires enough staff to operate seven vessels. But it has only enough for six.

"Both the engine room and the wheelhouse are going the wrong direction right now, unfortunately. We're not making as many as we need," Tornga said in a House committee hearing on Tuesday.

In 2024, the system filled 31 positions but lost 45 workers for the same qualifications to retirement and resignations.