

Morelli to leave Town Council

Daniel Jackson | Posted: Thursday, July 19, 2012 7:50 am

Deputy Mayor Steve Morelli, Democrat, will sit for the last time in a Town Council meeting as a councilmember July 24. He will resign the council, close his law practice and take a position in state government.

Morelli was appointed by Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy to sit on the Worker's Compensation Commission, a quasi-judicial commission which handles the compensation law in the state.

"Stephen Morelli was appointed to the Workers' Compensation Commission due to his extensive experience with employment law, and his longstanding service to the public as a member of the Berlin Town Council," said Governor Malloy. "It is important to ensure that workers injured on the job receive prompt and fair payment of their lost wages and related medical expenses, and I believe that Mr. Morelli will be a valued member of the commission."

The 16-person commission seeks to ensure injured workers receive the payments of lost work time benefits and attendant medical expenses, according to the commission's website. Commission members hold hearings and mediate disputes between employees and their employers.

Mayor Adam Salina has worked with Morelli for eight years on the town council. Through that time, the two men got to know each other. Salina called Morelli a "loyal friend."

The task of sitting on council, doing "the work of the people," is a serious task but Morelli was able to keep the task of running the town light with his humor, Salina said.

"Steve is definitely a unique personality on the council," he said. "He's very thought provoking while adding humor and having a legal background is always helpful."

While Salina said the change is happening quickly and many things need to be talked about in regards to the change, the council is headed toward their August break, which will give the council time to adjust.

Councilmember Rachel Rochette will be named deputy mayor in Morelli's place, Salina said.

Because the change is happening mid-year, someone will be appointed to fill her councilmember position.

Morelli first sought this position last election when he met with Malloy and expressed his interest in sitting on the Worker's compensation Commission. He discussed his qualifications and skills with the governor.

"At that time, there were no openings that were perceived coming up in the near future," Morelli said.

But a seat on the council opened and Morelli was confirmed at a hearing July 10. He was waiting until

he knew he had the position before he started to close down his law practice. When he takes his oath of office, he will have to resign from town council.

For the past 20 years, Morelli has specialized in employment law.

“This will kind of be an extension of that. And there are certainly some other aspects of it; I’ll have a little bit of a learning curve.”

There are two moments Morelli remembers while working on the council. He fondly remembers working with former-councilmember Bob Dacy. “He had so much energy and enthusiasm,” he said.

The second was the town’s process in acquiring pistol creek. The developer was looking on changing the property’s zoning from conservation land to something else, said Morelli.

Salina couldn’t go to Hartford to testify before the committee there, so Morelli went. He convinced the committee not to make the change. Pistol Creek was going to be turned into a 792 unit development. The school system would never have absorbed the additional students, Morelli said.

“We’ve done a very good balancing act in moving Berlin forward without breaking the bank,” Morelli said.

He thanked Salina and Berlin for the time he had serving on the council.

“It’s another opportunity to learn something new and recharge my battery,” he said.

While 16 members hear employment disputes for the whole state, Morelli will join fellow Berlin resident Daniel Dilzer on the commission. Dilzer was nominated for the position under then-Governor Jodi Rell. According to his statement to the Judiciary Committee in 2008, he sat on Berlin’s Charter Revision Commission and the Board of Ethics.