

WHCP 91.7 FM - Jim Brady Interviews New Cambridge City Manager Glenn Steckman

WHCP: This is Midshore Midday. I'm Jim Brady.

After months long search from a pool of 15 candidates, the Cambridge City Council has selected its new city manager, Glenn Steckman. Today we're speaking with him from his current post as City Manager of Nome, Alaska. Congratulations, and welcome.

GS: Thank you.

WHCP: I understand Maryland will be sort of a homecoming for you.

GS: Well, actually even Dorchester County will be sort of a homecoming. I was born and raised in Baltimore City. Then my family moved out to Baltimore County, but I went to school in Baltimore City and Baltimore County through graduate school.

WHCP: Well, I imagine you did your homework when considering Cambridge. What kind of things registered with you?

GS: I am familiar with Dorchester County. That's where I started my career as a circuit riding town manager for some of the smaller communities. So, I've watched Dorchester County. I'm aware that there are a lot of great projects going on right now. You can see the redevelopment along Route 50, and the amount of building permits. So definitely Cambridge is a happening place.

WHCP: Did you get a chance to talk with the last city manager, Tom Carroll?

GS: No, but I've had extensive conversations with Dave Deutsch, who has been the acting town manager and obviously was part of the search, leading the recruiter for the search. I may speak with Mr. Carroll, but I applaud the amount of information that has been provided to me by Mr. Deutsch.

WHCP: So, what did you see when you were looking that's appealing for the job in Cambridge?

GS: Well, the number one thing, it brought me back to Maryland. One of the things is I've been away; my wife has tolerated me for being away for almost five years now. Working in Alaska was also on my bucket list, but also my bucket list is coming back to Maryland and to work in a community that I have somewhat familiarity with. But I don't have the in-depth level of familiarity because I haven't lived there, and I'm really looking to learn and meet with the leadership of all the various organizations in Cambridge when I get there.

WHCP: What are you aware of that are the main challenges so far?

GS: Well, I mean, obviously the issue of economic development. Dorchester County still has challenges from an economic development and growth and employment opportunities. Obviously, the development of the 32-acre parcel of land along the Choptank and how that's developed can mean that the city of Cambridge frankly has a positive cashflow that this property not only meets the needs of a developer, but meets the needs of the community. And the community can feel that this development will flow back into the town and not be isolated.

WHCP: Yeah. Speaking of the waterfront development, there's been quite a tussle over issues with that. Do you feel like you'll be able to step in to take up where management left off before?

GS: Well, obviously this has been a complicated issue, but I have been, in my career, I've been involved with

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development impacting communities up to \$1.2 billion. So, I mean, I've been in disputes, I've mediated disputes with always the intent that it's in the best interest of the community.

WHCP: How about goals? Do you have any programs or policies you're looking forward to putting into place?

GS: Well, I want to speak with the leadership, the commissioners. I want to speak with the staff. I'm actually coming back on August the 19th for one day because I want to meet with the staff before I actually start so that they can at least have, not that you get to know a person in a day, but they can at least who they get to know me a little bit and we can hit and get a running start. But the community also helps set the goals. And I want to talk with folks. I mean, I know there's sidewalk development. I know there's flooding mitigation, I know there's wastewater issues. I know there is probably going to be a need for more separation of storm water and wastewater lines, which could overwhelm the wastewater treatment plant. Obviously, the flood mitigation monies that have been awarded to the town. Other projects, the new, I guess it's the Boys and Girls Club over on Maces Lane. We want to make sure we can get that up and running very quickly, because right now the city really doesn't have a rec and parks program. And I think that's very important to give our young people something to do, especially in the long days of summer and even on weekends and other times during the winter.

WHCP: So how would you describe your management style?

GS: My approach is I maintain an open door. I mean, obviously there is hierarchy of how the city government runs, but I do maintain an open-door policy for my employees, for the community, for the community leaders. I will meet with people in the evening. I will meet with people on Saturdays. Actually, right now, I do maintain Saturday hours on Saturdays because certain of our residents can't meet with me during the week, and they want to come in on a Saturday morning and sit down and talk with me. I'm open to that. The more information I have and can gather, the better I can serve the residents, the businesses of Cambridge and Dorchester.

WHCP: Now you've been in municipal government since 1996?

GS: Well, even a little bit longer than that. I started out as a city councilman. I was a city councilman for about 10 years in Ocean City in two different stints, and I've been a municipal manager for just about 25 years now.

WHCP: What are some of the cities and towns that you've worked for?

GS: Well, I mean, obviously I worked, actually, I did a lot of work in Vienna, Maryland. That's where when I was a circuit riding manager, that's where I was pretty much based as I helped some of the smaller communities. But I was in Laurel, Delaware, and in three years we had up and designed and under construction, a brand-new wastewater treatment plant. It was a lot of projects that I had a good time doing in Laurel. I worked in Rhode Island; I worked some in Virginia. I worked for 10 plus years, 10 years or so in Pennsylvania and five years here up in Nome. I was the first city administrator because of a charter change in Pennsylvania. So, I'm used to being part of change, but I'm also a project type guy. I love doing projects, which I've always believed have been to the benefit of the community.

WHCP: Let's see. You were starting in September, so that's about a month before city elections.

GS: Well, I have more people to meet. The city manager's position is a nonpolitical position. I'm a member of the ICMA. My job is to work with the council, provide them with the information so they can make informed decisions, and sometimes channel information that I am receiving from the residents and businesses. But I'm a nonpolitical position, so whether there's election or not, that really should not impact on how I do my job.

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WHCP: So, have you begun looking for a home here yet?

GS: Well, actually was back. I've been back this month. My wife and I were looking at homes. We were also trying to fully understand the geographic borders of the city, because typically you use Waterlines. But I found out that the city waterlines extend beyond its boundaries. But we've looked at property that we know is in town, and obviously we're using the online tools too. But my wife is actually meeting with a realtor tomorrow to look at putting our house on the market in the near future in Salisbury.

WHCP: Well, good luck in your search. We've been talking with Cambridge's new city manager, Glenn Steckman. Thanks for taking the time and we look forward to more updates with you.

GS: I look forward to meeting you in person. I look forward to beginning my interaction with the residents of the great city of Cambridge. Thank you.

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