

New housing chief has walked the walk

Fitchburg director came from humble roots, outlines goals

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FITCHBURG — Doug Bushman, the new executive director of the city's housing authority, is looking forward to making it the best in the state and believes in its hardworking staff and it now has the leadership to pursue that goal, he said.

"This is Fitchburg's time," Bushman said Monday. "The mayor and his leaders are making the moves in the city. I want to be a part of it and I want us to be part of it."

He met with staff at the Clarence-Durkin building on Day Street to present his goals as director. It was the first day that the Fitchburg Housing Authority has oper-

ated independently since being managed by the Leominster authority.

Five years ago, the state placed the Fitchburg authority under the Leominster Housing Authority because of a lack of leadership and management for hundreds of subsidized family and elderly housing units across the city.

Bushman credited the Fitchburg staff for the seamless transition to independent operation, which came about a week and a half earlier than expected.

Linda Byrne, chair of the Fitchburg Housing Authority's Board of Directors, said she is pleased to be part of the transition. Please see **HOUSING/5**



Doug Bushman, the new executive director of the Fitchburg Housing Authority, speaks to office and maintenance staff Monday at the Clarence Durkin building at 50 Day St.

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direction the authority is moving in.

The board was instrumental in making the Fitchburg authority independent again and hiring Bushman as executive director, she said.

Before coming to the city, he led the Marlboro Housing Authority for seven years. Leaving was the most difficult decision he has made besides starting a family, Bushman said.

On Monday, he told the story about a boy whose family moved into an affordable housing complex. Eventually, the family saved up enough money to buy their first home and live the American Dream.

The boy, who Bushman later revealed was him, didn't realize until later that they had lived in public housing.

"To me, the passion of affordable housing has been in me my entire life," he said. "We are caretakers of that tradition and I want to replicate that in Fitchburg."

Bushman said he plans to incorporate the traits of teamwork, excellence, and ability into his goals as director.

He wants to focus on upkeep at each of the properties. Bushman pointed out how the outside area at the Durkin building has been cleaned up and how a

hole on the sidewalk area had been repaired within a matter of days of his beginning as director.

"Now the standard has been raised," he said. "It's the little things."

Bushman is working on a budget for the board of directors that includes funding for equipment, personnel, training. One position he would like to have is a special services coordinator at the Green Acres family housing property on Normandy Road.

Mayor Stephen DiNatale met with Bushman and Byrne last week. Bushman's leadership marks the beginning of plans to making the Fitchburg Housing Authority successful, DiNatale said.

"We don't want the housing authority to be a last resort," he said. "We want to be a first resort."

After outlining Bushman's goals, Bushman, Byrne, and DiNatale presented certificates to housing authority office and maintenance staff to thank them for their work during the transition moving forward.

"These are very important to recognize the work we've done," Bushman said.

Afterward, staff members chatted with each other and ate pieces of Bushman's blue and white welcome cake.

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