

Editorial: Process gives Atkinson strength

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And so it all came down to this: Amarillo city commissioners have decided unanimously to go with who they know, trust and in whom they have confidence will do a good job leading a growing city.

Jarrett Atkinson's appointment Tuesday as the next city manager came after a national search produced a top-tier slate of finalists, gleaned from a long list of applicants.

Atkinson had been serving as interim city manager since the retirement this past spring of Alan Taylor. It would have been easy for the City Commission to give the job to Atkinson and forgo the time and hassle of interviewing the four other men who qualified as finalists for this all-important job.

Commissioners opted instead to take a measured, deliberative course, choosing to open this search up to a wide range of candidates. As Mayor Debra McCartt said Tuesday, the consulting firm the city hired did its "due diligence" in collecting a long list of qualified applicants for this critical post.

The city's selection process was strengthened by the test it put all the candidates through. It also strengthened the hand of the man who got the job. Atkinson himself noted right after being appointed that the process was as "rigorous" as anything he's experienced since college.

Atkinson brings tremendous knowledge in at least one key area to this post: water management. That was his primary responsibility while serving on the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission staff before moving to City Hall as Taylor's chief assistant.

He also takes the reins of a major governmental institution responsible for a variety of public services. Atkinson already speaks with credibility on these issues and figures to be a remarkably quick study as he takes a firm grip on the levers of authority at City Hall.

Commissioner Jim Simms complimented the city for attracting a large field of "quality candidates," adding that "this must be the Thanksgiving season."

Commissioner Ron Boyd said he hoped the process would produce a manager who could take the city in a new direction. "Jarrett stood out," he said.

And Commissioner Brian Eades spoke of the "learning tool" the selection process produced and said the city is going to embark on a new era of better "customer service" for Amarillo's residents.

This process worked well for the city - as will the city's new chief executive officer.

Well done.