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Ramsey County sheriff leaving post for research at Oxford



Ramsey County Sheriff Matt Bostrom announces he is leaving his job to do research at Oxford University, during a news conference in St. Paul on Tuesday, Dec. 6, 2016. (Pioneer Press: Scott Takushi)

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Ramsey County Sheriff Matt Bostrom confirmed Tuesday he's retiring from his post to lead research at the University of Oxford about increasing community trust in police. That goal, which Bostrom pursued during his tenure as sheriff, has taken added urgency in the wake of incidents casting doubt on the integrity of law enforcement.

Bostrom's last day will be Jan. 3, halfway through his second four-year term. The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners will have to appoint a sheriff to fill the vacancy, according to the county charter and state law.

Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt, who chairs the board, said it's her intention for the new sheriff to take over on Jan. 3 for "a seamless transition." Ramsey County voters will have the opportunity to elect a new sheriff in November 2018, Reinhardt said.

"I know Matt to be a man of integrity and character and compassion," Reinhardt said. "He is committed to public service and I believe that what he is about to embark upon can truly be transformational."

Bostrom's departure caps a 34-year career in law enforcement. He began as a St. Paul police officer, rose through the ranks to become an assistant chief, and was first elected Ramsey County sheriff in 2010.

He highlighted his accomplishments Tuesday, including: reorganizing the department, co-founding the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, improving training and technology, preventing crime, and working to hire diverse personnel.

"The most important part of our mission is community trust, built through relationships with people we serve and work with," said Bostrom, who added that law enforcement agencies in the United States and other counties had noticed their work. "... I am proud of what we have accomplished and want to further advance community trust and legitimacy."

RESEARCH AT OXFORD

Bostrom, who has a doctorate from Hamline University in public education, [enrolled as a doctoral student](#) in criminology at Oxford in the term beginning Oct. 10. He's gone back and forth between Minnesota and England twice during that time, spending 30 days of the past eight weeks abroad, according to the sheriff's office. From now until his retirement, he's planning to be in town for at least 20 days.



Bostrom has been paid his regular salary, which is just over \$150,000, when he was at Oxford. He said he always continued his work as sheriff, staying in contact with his office through technology.

"I'm sheriff 24 hours a day and I drop what I'm doing at the (Oxford) Centre for Criminology to deal with things here," he said at a Tuesday news conference at his St. Paul office to announce his retirement. "This is the priority. ... I've been working as a sheriff every single day of the week, seven days a week, whether I've been here or at Oxford."

Bostrom has been conducting research at Oxford about increasing police trust and legitimacy through "character-based hiring" and he said he's been asked to serve as project leader. The goal is to develop a model that law enforcement agencies around the world can implement, Bostrom said. The study will likely take at least three years.

After Bostrom was elected sheriff, he said he brought the idea of "character-based hiring" to the sheriff's office in 2011. The idea is to hire people based on their character — honor, truth, responsibility and respect — and train them for competence, Bostrom said.

The sheriff said he's spent his own money for travel to Oxford and has not been paid by the university. The position he's taking is not funded, but he said there is "a reasonable assumption" it will be and he wanted to steer clear of collecting two salaries.

Last week, Bostrom said he had "deep conversations" with his wife and trusted friends, asking, "Should I continue to work in both capacities? Should I run for a third term or should I retire as sheriff and focus on contributing to the profession at Oxford?"

Bostrom announced Tuesday he'd decided to retire to focus on the research.

He turned 55 this year, the age that people can collect their full pension if they are fully vested in the Public Employees Retirement Association of Minnesota's Police and Fire Plan. The pension amount is based on the average of an employee's highest five earning years.

Bostrom said he and his wife will not be moving to England, but will be spending more time there.

"I'm still a Ramsey County guy," he said.

WHO'S NEXT FOR SHERIFF?



The county board plans to discuss the process it will take for appointing a new sheriff at a workshop Tuesday.

In 11 out of 12 sheriff vacancies in Minnesota, county boards have appointed sheriffs' second-in-command to the job, according to research by the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association over more than a decade.

"That's generally accepted," Reinhardt said. "It doesn't mean we have to do that. ... There's no predetermined outcome here."

Jack Serier (Courtesy of Ramsey County sheriff)

Jack Serier is the Ramsey County sheriff's office second in command as chief deputy. He said in an email Tuesday that, since the county board is in charge of the process, he would not comment about it.

If the board takes applications, St. Paul Police Senior Cmdr. Tina McNamara said on Tuesday she would strongly consider throwing her hat in the ring. But Wednesday morning she said she had changed her mind. She said people had encouraged her to step up for the sheriff job, but plans to stay in her current job.



Tina McNamara (Courtesy photo)

"Thanks for all the encouragement and support," McNamara said in a statement. "As I think about it, I realize how much I enjoy the work and people at the St. Paul Police Department. This is the right place for me. At this time I will not be pursuing the Ramsey County Sheriff's position."



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