

## Pitkin County's election manager stepping down

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Dwight Shellman III  
ALL /

ASPEN – Dwight Shellman III, Pitkin County's election manager, is stepping down from what he calls the most challenging and rewarding job he has ever held.

Shellman tendered his resignation Tuesday, effective at the end of February, though he will depart sooner if he secures another job. Otherwise, Shellman said he is willing to stay on to help train his successor.

"It's such a steep learning curve – I can help," he said.

Shellman cited personal reasons for his resignation but said he'd like to continue working in the elections realm, possibly on the Front Range. A former antitrust lawyer in New York, in 2008 Shellman returned to the Roaring Fork Valley, where he grew up, to care for his ailing father, former Pitkin County Commissioner Dwight Shellman Jr., who died in March. The younger Shellman took the election job in January 2010.

"It has been the most challenging, interesting and most important job I've ever had in my life," he said.

It's also a demanding position, Shellman said, and the observation in the county Clerk and Recorder's Office is that no election manager has stayed through more than one presidential election year. He is, however, only the second person to hold the post since Clerk and Recorder Janice Vos Caudill created it.

"Dwight was a great fit – incredibly bright and fun to work with," Vos Caudill said. "He worked tremendous hours to make sure everything was executed professionally."

Long hours have been the hallmark of this election year for both Shellman and Vos Caudill. The workload for Shellman has included some all-nighters and working virtually every weekend since before the June primary. He oversaw a countywide redistricting – the redrawing of election district boundaries – before the primary.

The technological requirements of conducting an election, along with the complex law that governs elections, make for a demanding job, Shellman said.

In addition, Pitkin County's home-rule charter contains unique provisions regarding campaign finance and the election of candidates to county office, so Pitkin differs from every other county in Colorado. Shellman said he found his legal background particularly helpful as a result.

"I'm frankly amazed that people with no legal experience can do the job," he said. "However, there are lots of county election departments and lots of county clerks in the state who have no legal education and yet do an outstanding job."

Vos Caudill said she hasn't yet decided whether a law degree will be part of the job description for the position going forward.

"It absolutely was a benefit to have an attorney," she said.

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