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August 10, 2005, Wednesday

SECTION: LOCAL; Pg. B01**LENGTH:** 327 words**HEADLINE:** Mayor: Search almost over;
MORENO VALLEY: A recruiting firm is narrowing down names for the city manager post.**BYLINE:** DAN LEE; THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE**BODY:**

MORENO VALLEY

About threedozen people have applied for the job of Moreno Valley's city manager, the mayor said Tuesday.

Mayor Richard Stewart said a recruiting firm has interviewed applicants and is expected to whittle down the field.

The Sacramento-based CPS Executive Search firm is expected to present a list of candidates for the Moreno Valley City Council's consideration at a closed meeting Tuesday, he said.

"Whether we accept it is up to us," Stewart said by phone.

The council is searching for a replacement for City Manager Gene Rogers, who has announced that he will retire by the beginning of 2006 after more than eight years. The council is expected to interview candidates who reach a short list, Stewart said.

One of the applicants is Planning Commissioner Michael Geller, who is a partner in Stewart's law firm.

Stewart said he would abstain from any discussions or votes regarding Geller's candidacy to avoid any conflict.

Geller said he knew that their partnership could become an issue during the recruiting process, but he said Moreno Valley's needs were more important. He added that he didn't ask Stewart's permission to apply for the job. If the council hired Geller, the law firm would have to hire another attorney to take his place, both said.

Steve **Frates**, a senior fellow at the **Rose Institute** of State and Local Government at Claremont McKenna College, said many think they can do the job, but cities are better off getting a trained manager.

"It takes quite a bit of time and professional training before you can comfortably do a competent job," **Frates** said by phone. "It's not a good place to do on-the-job training."

Meanwhile, Rogers is looking to fill the post of economic development director. The assistant city manager's job also is open, but Rogers said the job would remain vacant until the new city manager can fill it.

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