

After three decades with Eagan police force, chief announces his retirement

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Eagan Police Chief Jim McDonald is retiring effective June 30 after three decades with the department. "Mac," as he's known, was hired by Eagan's second chief, Jay Berthe, in 1988 and has spent his entire career with the city.

With other police retirements coming up and a major remodel of the police building on tap, the time just seemed right to walk away, McDonald, 55, said Friday.

"I've done my time, 30 years, and I don't know that I have the energy to see all of that through, honestly," he said. "It would be a disservice to my department and the community to halfheartedly stay."

McDonald was hired as an overnight police officer in March 1988 after working just three weeks as a community service officer.

"In those days, the city was growing by leaps and bounds and they were hiring a lot of cops," he said. "They needed them to keep pace with the population."

McDonald was an overnight patrol sergeant from 1992 to 1994, then moved over to investigations. He was appointed captain in 1999 and deputy chief in 2004.



Before the Dakota County dispatch center opened in 2007, former Police Chief Kent Therkelsen agreed to be its director. That opened the door for a new Eagan chief. McDonald was sworn in on Sept. 5, 2006.

With 30 years of policing now behind him, McDonald said he looks forward to spending more time with his wife and their 14-year-old son.

"It's been a 24-hour job, with the phone always ringing," he said. "And after 30 years, that takes a toll on you."

The Eagan City Council will hold a special meeting May 22 to interview Deputy Chief Roger New for the position. McDonald is recommending New for the job.

"He's been my wingman for a long time, and he's really solid," McDonald said. "The department is running in good shape, and I'd like to see him carry on what we've accomplished."