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Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2020

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Longtime SDE schools finance chief to retire; successor named

(BOISE) – Tim Hill, who has headed public school finance for the State Department of Education under four superintendents of public instruction, will retire Friday, Sept. 18 -- 23 years and 10 days after he first joined the department.

“This is truly the end of an era, and Tim leaves big shoes to fill,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said. “Tim is a true expert and a great partner and has earned the respect and admiration of people throughout state government and Idaho schools. I thank him for his many years of service to the schools and students of Idaho, and I will miss him even as I celebrate this new chapter for him.”

Hill was hired Sept. 8, 1997, as a supervisor of Public School Finance under Superintendent Anne Fox and was promoted less than a year later to become bureau chief of school finance and transportation. He became deputy superintendent of school finance and transportation in 2005 under Superintendent Marilyn Howard, and served as a deputy under Superintendent Tom Luna, overseeing child nutrition, technology services and transportation as well as school finance. He has served Superintendent Ybarra since she took office in 2015.

Hill said he will miss his dedicated colleagues in the department and the school employees he has worked with who all work to make a difference in the lives of Idaho’s public school students.

“I loved the challenge and reward of calculating and distributing payments to school districts and charter schools,” he said. “I recognized early on that doing my job to the best of my ability would help all of the State Superintendents of Public Instruction that I worked for focus on their education initiatives and goals.”

Superintendent Ybarra said the transition to a new finance leader will be eased by the fact that Hill’s job will be filled by Julie Oberle, who has worked with Hill at the department since February 1998. Now the department’s senior financial management analyst, Oberle “has been cross-training on my major responsibilities for the last several years,” Hill said, including calculating payments to districts and charter schools.

“He has been a phenomenal boss,” Oberle said. “I’ve learned so much working with Tim, and I can’t thank him enough for his encouragement, support and guidance during our 22 years together.”

“Nobody knows the intricacies of Idaho School Finance like Tim Hill,” said Oberle, who will take over Sept. 20 with the title chief financial officer, Public School Finance. “During his time with the department, Tim has seen the number of school districts and charter schools grow from 112 to 182 and the public school appropriation grow from \$877 million to over \$2 billion.”

Hill’s most public role has been at the Legislature each year, explaining the superintendent’s budget requests, demystifying formulas and talking through the numbers with members of the House and Senate Education Committees.

In addition to his vast depth of knowledge on school finance, Hill is admired by coworkers for his devotion to family and respect for his employees.

He said he looks forward to spending more time with his wife, children, grandchildren and hobbies, including hunting, fishing, skiing and camping. His plans also include plentiful home projects and some traveling.

Hill earned an MBA from Boise State University and worked in banking for 20 years before joining the State Department of Education, and notes “it was never a goal to get a job in public school finance.”

“I was looking for any finance-related job after getting downsized from the bank where I worked,” Hill said, and the first job he was offered turned out to be the one he would enjoy for the next 23 years.

“Career decisions are often difficult and while uncertain when making them, they seem to make perfect sense when looking back,” Hill said. “If given the chance to start over, I wouldn’t change a thing. I have been blessed and fortunate to have worked with so many great people, and I will miss all of them.”

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Attached: Photos of Tim Hill and Julie Oberle