

Trade groups looking forward to working with new WEDC CEO

Posted on Friday, Sep 6, 2019

Some of the state's top trade groups say they're looking forward to working with Missy Hughes when she takes over as CEO of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp.

Gov. Tony Evers announced Thursday that Hughes would replace Mark Hogan, who officially left the agency Tuesday. She will begin the job Oct. 1.

Hughes has been the chief mission officer and general counsel for Organic Valley/CROPP cooperative since 2003. It is the nation's largest farmer-owned organic cooperative.

"WMC is excited to continue the positive relationship we have had with WEDC in the past," said Kurt Bauer, president and CEO of Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, the state's largest business group.

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"As we have talked about in the past, the labor shortage is one of the biggest challenges for economic development in our state, and it is our hope WEDC will make talent attraction a focus to help grow our state's workforce," Bauer said in an email.

In a statement, the Wisconsin Bankers Association emphasized WEDC's role in the state's economic development efforts.

"As key drivers of our state's economy, our member banks as well as the association look forward to meeting Missy Hughes and working toward the same goal of improving and growing the Badger State's business opportunities," the statement said.

Tim Sheehy, president of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, says Hughes is “clearly highly accomplished and appears to bring a strong background to the role at WEDC.”

Tom Still, president of the Wisconsin Technology Council, says Hughes “stands to help execute on Governor Evers’ vision of a 72-county economic strategy.”

“Missy Hughes brings experience inside an innovative company, knowledge of what makes rural economies tick, and solid national ties and relationships,” Still said.

Hughes’ appointment will be subject to Senate confirmation, but a spokesman for Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, didn’t immediately return a message seeking comment.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, who like Fitzgerald has the power to appoint members of the WEDC Board, was reviewing the selection, a spokeswoman said.

Republicans changed state law in the December lame-duck session to strip the gov of the power to appoint the agency head until Sept. 1, a move that many saw as an effort to ensure Mark Hogan would stay on the job to oversee projects that were begun under Gov. Scott Walker. Hogan left the agency officially on Tuesday.

Senate Minority Leader Jennifer Shilling, D-La Crosse, said she has worked with Hughes in her role at Organic Valley and praised her “extensive knowledge in business, leadership and management,” saying it will be a valuable asset for the state.

Assembly Minority Leader Gordon Hintz, D-Oshkosh, praised Hughes as a “proven leader at one of Wisconsin’s most successful, homegrown businesses.” Hintz appointed himself to serve on the agency’s board.