

Email: Ex-Oregon governor's fiancée played active state role

By Jonathan J. Cooper
Associated Press

SALEM (AP) — The fiancée of former Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber, who recently stepped down amid a scandal, was active and involved in his administration, according to email released by the state.

Kitzhaber had downplayed Cylvia Hayes' role in the administration, insisting she was not adviser or public official, which would require her to adhere to the ethics laws that he and his staff must uphold.

The emails show the very active role that Kitzhaber's longtime companion played in his administration, as well as the tension that it sometimes raised with the governor's staff. Hayes routinely attended meetings, was copied on emails among senior staff and requested information or clerical assistance from state employees.

Kitzhaber resigned amid scandal earlier this year over allegations that the former first lady used her relationship with him to land contracts for her business.

Kitzhaber, a Democrat, stepped down in February, saying the influence-peddling allegations surrounding Hayes had become too much of a distraction. The FBI is investigating and has issued subpoenas for the emails and thousands of other records.

On Friday, the State of Oregon released 94,000 emails involving Hayes. They are messages between Hayes and the official email accounts for staff members in Kitzhaber's office. Yet to be released are Hayes' interactions with officials in other State agencies, as well as emails from her personal accounts that discussed State business. Hayes has filed a lawsuit seeking to block the release of her personal emails.

The emails show that Hayes was involved in policy meetings, and her input was sometimes sought on policy questions.

In one example from April 2011, shortly after Kitzhaber took office, the governor's executive assistant sent an email to an aide assigned to Hayes. She had scheduled a meeting for two policy advisers, Kitzhaber and Hayes, but the governor had to leave early.

"They will discuss natural resource and jobs/economy-related issues," the assistant wrote. "The Governor will stay for 15 minutes; but I expect the meeting to last 30 minutes."

A year later, Hayes was asked to weigh in on a bill before the Legislature.

"Cheryl, Regarding bullet 3 of HB 4144, I would not like to see it removed," Hayes wrote. "That is counter to where we are headed with the 10-year energy plan

and implementing carbon accounting."

Her relations with staff sometimes caused tensions. In December 2012, Hayes sent a note to all staff asking them to buy \$100 tickets to a fundraiser. Kitzhaber's chief of staff quickly replied: "Cylvia, can I ask you not to use folks' State email to do fundraising requests. It puts the team in an awkward position given your role as First Lady."

Last year, Hayes complained to Kitzhaber's communications director, Nkenge Harmon-Johnson, that a speech she gave didn't go as well as it could have because a speechwriter hadn't finished a draft. The writer had shifted to work on a late-scheduled speech for the governor.

Harmon-Johnson was later fired, in part because of her frosty relationship with the first lady, according to her termination letter.

Hayes often sought opportunities to travel to conferences or speak to audiences.

In December 2013, a spokeswoman for the Bend-La Pine Schools learned Kitzhaber and Hayes would be in town and invited them to a fundraiser to support scholarships for after-school sport and club programs. While the governor couldn't make

it, Hayes said she would be "happy to attend and make a few brief remarks about the Prosperity Initiative and how athletic scholarships helped me become a first-generation college grad."

When the organizers said there's no room for her to speak but they'd still love her to come, she emailed her assistant: "Please find a nice way to decline."

Shortly after Hayes held a tearful news conference last October to acknowledge that she was paid to enter a fraudulent marriage in 1997 with a man seeking immigration benefits, she replied to an email from a European man she'd met at a conference.

"It sounds like maybe you have not seen the media firestorm I am in the midst of," she wrote. "It is very intense, painful and embarrassing. I do know it will pass as the campaign season closes. I will make a note to follow up with you in November to set up a call."

Associated Press writers Steven Dubois in Portland, Oregon; Gene Johnson in Seattle; Tami Abdollah and Robert Jablon in Los Angeles; Olga R. Rodriguez in San Francisco; and Sheila Kumar in Salem, Oregon contributed to this report.

RODEO: Former Rodeo Queens will participate in parade

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"We have already signed up nearly 30 of them."

With many entries, Buckmann recommends getting applications in early to be sure you can be placed.

"Our Sisters Rodeo Parade is a highlight of rodeo activities. Bands, other rodeo courts, youth groups, colorful floats, vintage autos, dogs and horses make this a really fun event to watch. Participants and viewers have a really good time," said Bob Buckmann, Sisters Rodeo director charged with parade management.

Judging will start at 8:30 a.m. on parade day, with trophies and ribbons awarded to both adult and youth entries.

Information for visiting rodeo courts and advisers is also available at the rodeo ticket office for both the parade and the grand entry during the four rodeo performances.

The 75th Sisters PRCA Rodeo will feature five performances on June 10, 12-14. Tickets may be purchased at the rodeo office at 220 W. Cascade Ave. in Sisters or by calling 541-549-0121 or 800-827-7522.

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