

City manager discharged gun in civic center office



Chris Eppley

Press release says 'accident'

Longtime Keizer City Manager Chris Eppley discharged a firearm in his office inside the Keizer Civic Center around noon on Thursday, March 4.

According to a press release, the Keizer City Council has retained an outside investigator to investigate the accidental discharge of a firearm by Eppley. No one was injured in this incident.

"To protect the integrity of the investigation, no additional informa-

tion will be released at this time," said Kathy Peck, the city's attorney for human resources.

Keizertimes has requested a copy of an incident report stemming from discharge of the weapon, but had not received a reply before the press release was distributed.

Keizer Police Department officials said they had no knowledge of the incident and it does not appear on a daily log of police calls from March 4.

Carrying a firearm on city property would appear to be a violation of the city's personnel policies.

"The types of conduct listed below are strictly prohibited: Being in possession of guns and weapons on

city property, including in parking lots or in city vehicles unless approved in writing by the city manager, chief of police or human resource manager," the city's personnel policy handbook states.

The handbook states employees with concealed carry licenses are permitted to have a weapon "in an employee's locked vehicle in a city parking lot."

Oregon law (ORS 163.195) allows those who discharge firearms, other than police officers or a resident acting in self defense, to be charged with a recklessly endangering another person.

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DON'T FORGET TO SPRING AHEAD
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Salem man arrested for fake bomb threat

A 56-year-old Salem man was arrested Sunday, March 7, for allegedly threatening employees of a discount store with a supposed bomb.



T. Schneider

Keizer Police Department dispatch received a call at 10:08 a.m. from the Dollar Tree, 5014 River Road N., reporting a man in the store was acting suspiciously and told employees he had a bomb in a black duffel bag he was carrying.

"Responding officers detained the man without incident after he exited the store,"

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SRO program to end

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

For almost a year now, many community members and activist groups, such as Latinos Unidos Siempre, have been calling for Salem-Keizer Public Schools (SKPS) to end contracts with Student Resource Officers (SROs), citing that they make students of color feel unsafe and play a role in contributing to the "school-to-prison pipeline."

On Tuesday, March 9, SKPS superintendent Christy Perry announced that the district will no longer be contracting with local police departments to station SROs at schools.

"We have also heard from many of our students and parents of color that the presence of armed police officers in schools can result in emotional and psychological harm that makes them feel unsafe in our schools. Many of these students have told

"... these students have told us time and again that the presence of armed police officers negatively impacts their mental health ..."

— SKPS superintendent Christy Perry



us time and again that the presence of armed police officers negatively impacts their mental health and is a barrier to them developing a strong sense of belonging," Perry said.

"It is for these reasons that I have decided to not renew the school resource contract. Making this decision at this point in time allows us to begin to imagine how we can create schools that are emotionally, physically, and psychologically safe

for all students that involve a different relationship with law enforcement. We will continue to engage our students, families, community partners, staff, and administrators, in this important dialogue."

The decision was met with some backlash from board members, who said they had received feedback from SKPS parents about SROs being a benefit to their student.

"I heard from so many parents where my child was

being bullied and it was an officer in the school that actually saved their life, I mean they didn't commit suicide ... because that officer was there," board director Marty Heyen said.

The district's SRO program, which stationed 11 police officers at middle and high schools across the district, cost SKPS nearly \$1 million per year. Officers from the Keizer and Salem Police Departments, as well as the Marion County Sheriff's Office, each covered schools that fell in their agency's jurisdiction.

The decision comes one month before secondary students are scheduled to return to their respective schools — Perry had previously suspended contracts with police departments for the school year.

Perry claimed that her

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Keizer's rep on the Duck baseball field
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Submitted photo

MCFD1 to ask for reduced levy in May

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

When Marion County Fire District #1 (MCFD1) had their local option levy rejected by voters in the November general election, the district was forced to make significant cutbacks at the start of the year — the levy accounted for 30%, or \$2.4 million, of MCFD1's operating revenue.

The district was forced to lay off 12 full-time firefighters/paramedic, close down fire stations and take emergency apparatus out of service. MCFD1 is also down to just having three responding

units — down from the 5.5 units they had before the budget cuts. Additionally, MCFD1 has lost 23 volunteers in the last 14 months.

Due to the lack of personnel, MCFD1 is, at times, unable to respond to 911 calls. Last month, when the ice storm caused a multitude of emergencies around the Salem-Keizer area, the district was unable to respond to 20 calls for service.

"I have been in the fire service for 28 years and I have never seen anything like this," MCFD1 fire chief Kyle McMann said. "Usually

when someone calls the fire department, we always come. But that is not the case right now."

McMann also said that response times have been delayed by over a minute, which doesn't sound like a lot, but could be the difference between life and death.

"Response time is everything. A fire, for instance, doubles every 60 seconds. A brain or heart without oxygen for 60 seconds can lead to

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City budget growing ever tighter

Fewer people are around to run vital services

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

Between employee layoffs and positions that are not being filled after numerous retirements, the City of Keizer has reduced its staff by eight employees.

"The city is primarily a people organization and that means people are where we go when we have to cinch our belts," said City Finance Director Tim Wood at a meeting of the Keizer Long-Range Planning Committee Monday, March 8.

In some instances major positions, such as a planning director for the city, are vacant and the savings are being funneled into keeping the Keizer Police Department staffed.

Nearly three years ago, the city enacted a \$4-per-month police services fee to pay for an additional five officers. That fee is still dedicated to the five officers, but officer positions that are paid for out of the city's general fund

"The question has become whether it is worth it to people that live in Keizer to pay a nominal fee that increases by about \$100 a year"

— John Teague,
Keizer Police Chief

are going unfilled.

As a result of numerous retirements, KPD never actually hit its goal of 42 officers. While COVID-19 made it possible to adjust some staffing, such as reassigning a school resource officer (SRO), the SRO

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A thoughtful gift at Cummings
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WandaVision review
Hint: Watch it ASAP
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Exciting changes are **ALMOST** here

Check out Keizertimes NEXT WEEK