

Eppley allies turn out to defend him to council

Oral testimony backed Eppley, letters mostly called for ouster

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

Allies of Keizer's embattled city manager, Chris Eppley, turned out in droves urging the Keizer City Council to use restraint as they determine what actions will be taken next.

An independent investigator is looking into an incident in which Eppley discharged a gun in his office on March 4. No one was injured.

At the beginning of public testimony, which was nearly all in regard to the Eppley's incident, Mayor Cathy Clark read a lengthy statement about what the council is doing and has been advised to do moving forward. March 15 was the first city council meeting held in the wake of the incident.



Eppley

"By demonstrating our values of treating all people with dignity and respect, and exercising restraint, we hope that our employees and residents know we have committed to gathering the facts and making a decision based on those facts," Clark said. "You, as the residents of Keizer, have the right to your opinion and we, as the decision makers, have responsibility

to retain our objectivity."

Eppley himself was in attendance at the meeting.

Only one of those who offered testimony supporting Eppley, Susan Dunfee, claimed no prior connection to him.

"I have been very discouraged and upset by the rush to judgment in the attacks against Mr. Eppley," said Dunfee, "I believe the steps you have taken are in line."

Eppley's other supporters included former Keizer city councilors Amy Ryan Courser, Jim Taylor, Richard Walsh, Marlene Parsons and Brandon Smith; former Salem city councilor TJ Sullivan; and members of the Keizer business community.

"He has done a lot of great work and, with anyone here, they need to have the benefit of due process. We should wait for the facts and not rush to judgment," said James Hutches.

Hutches also read a letter from Jonathan Thompson, past president of the Keizer Chamber of Commerce. The letter did not indicate Thompson was acting a spokesperson for the business group.

"I have made mistakes in the past and will again in the future. None of us is perfect. However, I hope that the totality of my life will not be judged by its worst moments. We owe the same to Chris," Thompson wrote.

Resident Jessica Davidson asked that the council support Eppley "because nobody in this life is perfect."

Bob Parsons, the husband of former city councilor Marlene Parsons, was emotionally shaken at claims the council tried to cover up the incident.

"People with an agenda want to see [Eppley] gone and that is not the way this works," Parsons said. "I respect him being here to hold his head up while people want to take his head."

Smith, the former city councilor, meekly recollected his own accidental discharge of a weapon.

"I have a concealed carry license and I had accidental discharge at 25. I could have hurt my wife. My dedication to safety went up 1,000% and has stayed there since that day," Smith said. "I'm quite sure this has been a learning experience for Mr.

See EPPLEY, page A7

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