

Former police chief hired to investigate

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

A former Woodburn Police Department (WPD) police chief has been hired to investigate an accidental discharge of a firearm by Keizer City Manager Chris Eppley.

Kathy Peck, the city's legal counsel in human resource matters, said she expects the investigation to be complete by the end of March.

On March 10, Mayor Cathy Clark signed a contract with Jim Ferraris, a retired Woodburn police chief, to conduct the investigation. The scope of the investigation has not been disclosed.

Eppley discharged a firearm inside his office on March 4. No one was hurt and the incident was not reported to police.

Keizertimes reached out to Eppley and offered him the opportunity to tell his side of what happened, but he and the reporter agreed to wait until more of the process has played out.

"I'm not going to try to make this less of an issue than it is. This is clearly an earth shattering event in my life, both professionally and personally and my focus now is to learn from it and become a better person, father, husband, professional, and Catholic," Eppley said.

At a Keizer City Council meeting Monday, March 15, Clark offered up a few

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— CHRIS EPPLEY
City Manager, KEIZER

more details regarding the timeline after the firearm was discharged.

After the incident, the city safety committee, human resources department, the mayor and outside legal counsel were notified of the incident.

The members of the city's safety committee include a chair, two city hall representative, two public works representatives, a management representative (human resources director Machell DePina) and two employees of the Keizer Police Department, including Lt. Trevor Wenning.

Keizertimes asked if a police report had been made regarding the incident. Lt. Bob Trump said neither he, nor the chief or another lieutenant had knowledge of what happened. It is not known

permit and discharge it accidentally it is stupid upon stupid," Rodriguez said.

Eppley told the *Statesman Journal* earlier this week that he possesses a concealed carry license.

In written comments submitted, calls for Eppley's dismissal were more prevalent.

"I strongly support removing Mr. Eppley from his position for putting the lives of city workers and city residents in danger," wrote Anna McKenzie. "He is paid handsomely by the taxpayers and puts all that enter that facility at risk."

Eppley's salary as Keizer city manager is more than \$160,00, the figure does not include health benefits, retirement contributions and other benefits such as a reimbursement for using a personal vehicle for work-related duties.

"It does not say good things if leaders can dodge the consequences purely by virtue of being at the top of the totem pole. The law applies to us all. The rules of conduct apply to all city employees, even those making six figures and writing policy," wrote Will and Sarah Comerford.

Resident LaTonya Gibbs called Eppley's conduct "disgraceful" in a letter to the council.

"Chris Eppley not only should be jobless at this point, he should be charged and arraigned. Keizer needs to show now how Keizer Strong it is and make certain that any and all will have to accept the repercussions of bad decisions," Gibbs wrote.

City councilors are fond of using the term "Keizer Strong" as a rallying cry when situations are difficult or uncomfortable.

whether Wenning reported the incident to colleagues or supervisors within the department.

DePina said the committee has not formally met since the incident.

"It is anticipated the safety committee will discuss safety-related issues regarding the incident following the completion of the investigation, when there will be a more complete record of what actually occurred," she said.

The council met in executive session on Monday, March 8, and discussed the

next steps. A Keizertimes reporter was present during the meeting, but members of the media are legally prohibited from reporting on what is discussed in executive sessions.

According to public records, Ferraris was hired by the Beaverton Police Department in 1978, spent 19 years with the Portland Police Bureau before becoming a deputy chief with the Salem Police Department, and hired by the WPD as chief in 2014. He retired from the Woodburn department two weeks ago.

brainfood

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By Charles Preston

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EPPLEY,

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Eppley and I would trust him with my life and my safety."

Sullivan, the former Salem city councilor, lauded Eppley for a laundry list of "good work" for the city and ended his time making light of the incident.

"It will be an awesome story at his retirement party," Sullivan said.

Only three detractors spoke during public testimony. Councilor Ross Day grew contentious during the testimony of Keizer resident RJ Navarro.

Navarro recalled recent incidents that made news when firearms were accidentally discharged and then police were notified.

"In both instances they notified police because they were genuinely sorry, Yet there has been no police report regarding this incident," Navarro said.

Day called out Navarro for attempting to impugn the character of city employees. Navarro followed his statement with the assertion he, as a person of color, would have been treated differently.

"There isn't a jury of peers here, there is a jury of friends," said Navarro.

Day objected to the statement and accused Navarro of implying the council was racist.

Day also rebuked resident Rich Rodriguez twice during earlier testimony, but Rodriguez testimony could be considered inflammatory.

"When you have a concealed weapons