

# Council, Eppley draw continued support, ire in wake of city manager's resignation

By ERIC A. HOWALD  
Of the Keizertimes

The resignation of former city manager Chris Eppley continued to churn waters in oral and written testimony during a Keizer City Council meeting Monday, April 5.

Eppley discharged a gun in his office in early March, which led to an internal investigation and Eppley's resignation on April 5.

Two former city councilors came to Eppley's defense while the majority questioned Eppley's judgment and the council's accountability.

"Why was he not immediately terminated? Near as I can tell, there was no reprimand. What does that tell city staff? Bringing a gun to work has no consequences. Firing a gun at work has no consequences," said Rich Rodriguez during public testimony. "Instead, he was given a golden parachute. The lesson I take from this is that a well-paid, white man gets a pass for one of the most egregious violations of city policy."

Eppley was offered six months salary and a year of insurance coverage after tendering his resignation. If accepted, the salary alone will amount to more than \$80,000.

Resident Carol Doerfler thanked the council for making "what had to be the most difficult decisions of your personal or professional career" and said she wanted to do so publicly for "doing the right thing."

Marlene Parsons, a former city councilor, offered support for the council and its decision and thanked the council for offering Eppley the severance package.

Former city councilor Jacque Moir also defended Eppley in written testimony.

"I am so sorry that so many people have the opinion that you have to be PERFECT (sic) to have/hold a job. I

Are all issues with every city official handled in this manner when there is a criminally negligent issue involved?

— LATONYA GIBBS

Keizer resident

certainly hope none of them has ever made a mistake or used bad judgment," Moir wrote. "I certainly hope when the time comes NO (sic) one allows these folks a second chance."

Resident Martin Doerfler questioned how any "sober" person could not tell the difference between an office and a car.

"Would any responsible, knowledgeable concealed carry permit holding gun owner begin to work a pistol without first dropping the magazine and clearing the slide to make sure there was not a bullet in the chamber? To do otherwise is not preoccupation, it's plain careless," Doerfler wrote.

In a description of the incident, Eppley said he was "preoccupied" when the discharge happened. He stated that he brought pieces of firearms into his office on

previous occasions, but claimed it was the first time he ever carried a full, loaded firearm into the Keizer Civic Center. Doing so would appear to have been a violation of ORS 166.370, which prohibits "possession of firearm or dangerous weapon in public building or court facility, states any person who intentionally possesses a loaded or unloaded firearm or any other instrument used as a dangerous weapon, while in or on a public building." Conviction on such a charge is a Class C felony, but no police report appears to have been made regarding the incident. Instead, Eppley contacted the city's human resources director, the chair of the civic center's safety committee and the mayor.

Resident LaTonya Gibbs questioned the council's authenticity regarding whether a minority employee would have been given the same treatment as Eppley.

"Are all issues with every city official handled in this manner when there is a criminally negligent issue involved? If so, that's both shady and not at all transparent," Gibbs wrote. "There could be a million character witnesses for [Eppley], it wouldn't change the facts of his behavior nor absolve him of any repercussions for his horrible decisions."

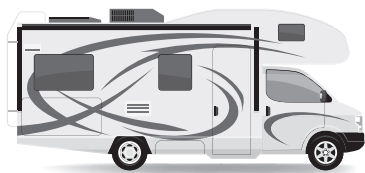
Gibbs was referring to a March city council meeting that brought out a number of Eppley's supporters to make the case for forgiveness.

Dylan Juran wrote that anything less than termination of the city manager set a precedent making it "inequitable to dismiss anyone else for making a similar mistake in the future. This decision doesn't only affect the position of city manager, but the condition of the workspace for all of city hall now and in the future."

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