

Internal investigation: City manager told others he was breaking policy on firearms

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

An internal investigation report into the discharge of a firearm by the former city manager found that Chris Eppley had carried loaded and unloaded firearms into the Keizer Civic Center on numerous occasions prior to discharging one in his office on March 4.

At the behest of the Keizer City Council, the internal investigation report was made public Friday, May 7.

The city released a series of questions and answers to coincide with the report. Those can be found on page A11. Keizertimes submitted another list of questions to city representatives and we've reprinted those with answers on page A1. The full 248-page report can be read at www.keizertimes.com for free.

In an incident report stemming from the discharge, Eppley stated he had never brought a complete firearm into city hall before and that he was "preoccupied" on March 4.

In interviews with the investigator, Eppley admitted to minimizing details, misleading fellow city employees and being "untruthful" in the incident report.

The city has workplace violence policies prohibiting firearms in the civic center aside from police officers, or unless given permission by one of three officials. No evidence Eppley had such permission has been made public.

Eppley had shown two current Keizer Police Department officers, Police Chief John Teague and Lt. Trevor Wenning, and four former or retired police officers firearms while in his office. Eppley produced the weapons from a concealed holster, his desk and a gym bag. Eppley holds a concealed carry license.

Eppley told the investigator, that when

• A former KPD lieutenant, Lance Inman, told an investigator that Eppley had shown him firearms in Eppley's office on as many as three additional occasions. Inman said Eppley produced weapons from his desk and that they appeared "fully assembled and operable."

• Eppley said that he had come into the building on weekends without disarming himself.

• Eppley had components of his weapons delivered to the Keizer Civic Center, but said "usually they're small pieces."

• Eppley told investigators he had done no safety checks on the gun prior to bringing it into his office on March 4.

• Eppley disposed of the bullet after the incident. He later admitted that the bullet and the spent cartridge could have had some significance in the investigation and that disposing of them in his office waste can was inappropriate.

• City officials waited 13 days, until March 18, to contact Oregon State Police and ask for an investigation into the incident and help determine whether a crime had been committed.

• On March 29, OSP released a report asserting no crime had been committed. Eppley's conduct was "careless" but not "reckless," according to the report.

• Eppley told an OSP officer who was investigating the incident that he had not

previously carried a gun into the office.

• Tammie Harms, who shares an office wall with Eppley, told the investigator she did not think about the potential of her own harm until after returning home.

• Eppley told another employee that there had been a lot going on and he was late for a Zoom meeting the day of the discharge in his office.

• More than 24 hours after the incident, the Keizer Police Department had not been notified of the gun discharge. A statement from Keizer's pro tem city manager attached to the report states that notifying the Keizer Police Department would have been "a conflict of interest."

• Police Chief John Teague, after inquiring about the incident, told Eppley that it didn't appear a crime had been committed because there was no one in the proximity of the desk when the shot was fired.

• The model of gun fired in the civic center office was a Walther PPQ M2, Eppley told an investigator it was, "Pretty much my gun that I don't know that well." There may have been additional rounds in the gun, but Eppley said he did not know how many.

The investigation completed by Ferraris Investigations and Consulting was completed in late March at a cost of nearly \$8,000 to taxpayers. It was withheld from the public despite numerous requests from the Keizertimes. The newspaper was preparing to appeal the matter in Marion County Circuit Court when the Keizer City Council voted to make the report public.

Eppley has been hired by Marion County since offering his resignation in early April. He was appointed to lead wild-fire recovery efforts in Detroit as its city manager.



My decision making around this has been poor ... so not very well.

— CHRIS EPPLEY
Former Keizer city manager

showing his weapons, he "probably would have said, 'Hey, don't tell HR, I'm violating policy right now.'" When the investigator asked how making such a statement would bode for a city manager, Eppley said, "My decision making around this has been poor ... so not very well."

During the investigation, Eppley stuck to his claims that the March 4 incident was the first time he brought a complete and loaded weapon in the civic center. He only revised his statement after a former Keizer police officer, who had seen him with a guns in his office on other occasions, contacted Eppley and told him to "be truthful."

Here are some of the other key findings of the report:

Prepare for unexpected power outages with a Generac home standby generator

REQUEST A FREE QUOTE!
877-557-1912

FREE 7-Year Extended Warranty*
A \$695 Value!

Offer valid February 15 - June 6, 2021

Special Financing Available
Subject to Credit Approval

*To qualify, consumers must request a quote, purchase, install and activate the generator with a participating dealer. Call for a full list of terms and conditions.

ROSE PARADE & LOS ANGELES TOUR

5 days, departs
Dec 29, 2021

FROM \$1,249 \$999*

VMT vacations

1-888-817-0676
promo code N7017

*Free date changes anytime up to 45 days prior to departure for land tours. Deposits and final payments remain non-refundable. Prices are per person based on double occupancy plus up to \$199 in taxes & fees. Single supplement and seasonal surcharges may apply. Add-on airfare available. Offers apply to new bookings only, made by 6/30/21. Other terms & conditions may apply. Ask your Travel Consultant for details.

Over 60 or have a disability?

We can help.

ADRC (1-855-673-2372)
Aging and Disability Resource Connection
of OREGON

1-855-ORE-ADRC
ADRCofOregon.org

Leaf Filter GUTTER PROTECTION

BACKED BY A YEAR-ROUND CLOG-FREE GUARANTEE

EXCLUSIVE LIMITED TIME OFFER!

15% OFF & **10% OFF**
YOUR ENTIRE PURCHASE
+ **5% OFF** TO THE FIRST 50 CALLERS ONLY!

FINANCING THAT FITS YOUR BUDGET!
Promo Code: 285
*Subject to credit approval. Call for details.

CALL US TODAY FOR A FREE ESTIMATE **1-855-536-8838**

Mon-Thurs: 8am-11pm, Fri-Sat: 8am-5pm, Sun: 2pm-8pm EST

*For those who qualify. One coupon per household. No obligation estimate valid for 1 year. **Offer valid at time of estimate only. †The leading consumer reporting agency conducted a 16 month outdoor test of gutter guards in 2010 and recognized LeafFilter as the "#1 rated professionally installed gutter guard system in America." CSLB# 1035795 DOP# 10783658-5501 License# 7656 License# 50145 License# 41354 License# 99338 License# 128344 License# 218294 WA UBI# 603 233 977 License# 2102212986 License# 2106212946 License# 2705132153A License# LEAFFNW822J2 License# WV056912 License# WC-29598-117 Nassau HIC License# H01067000 Registration# 176447 Registration# HIC0649905 Registration# C127229 Registration# C127230 Registration# 365920918 Registration# PC6475 Registration# IR721804 Registration# 13VH09953900 Registration# PAB63983 Suffolk HIC License# 52229-H License# 27051169445 License# 26200022 License# 262000403 License# 0086990 Registration# H-19114