

School board directors join protesters at rally against school mask mandates



Protesters line Commercial St. during a Feb. 18 rally against school mask mandates.

Photo by JOEY CAPPELLETTI of Keizertimes

BY JOEY CAPPELLETTI AND MATT RAWLINGS

Of the Keizertimes

Over 200 people gathered outside Salem-Keizer School District's Student Services Center Friday, Feb. 18 to protest mask requirements in the district's schools. Many of the "Rally for Our Students" protesters stood along Commercial St. in south Salem holding anti-mask signs and waving American flags.

The rally was the second protest of school mask mandates in two weeks, with a previous rally on Feb. 8 being held outside the school district offices. The location of Friday's rally, the Student Services Center, has been the location for Salem-Keizer school board meetings in the past.

School board directors Marty Heyen

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City council goes for Brown

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI
Of the Keizertimes

Adam Brown has been selected as Keizer's next city manager, the city announced Friday, Feb. 18 in a press release.

NEWSTAND PRICE: \$1.00/ISSUE



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Brown has worked for the past six years in Ontario, Oregon as a city manager and has over 25 years experience in city government. In an interview Monday, Feb. 21, Brown said that while contract details are still being finalized, he has told Ontario's city council that he intends on taking the position.

"After going to Keizer it was really too good an opportunity to pass up being near family and an opportunity for growth," said Brown, whose wife's family lives in Molalla.

Brown's selection came after he and two other finalists spent Feb. 15 and 16 interviewing with community members, city staff, department heads and the city council. Keizer Finance Director Tim Wood and former West Linn City Manager Eileen Stein were also finalists for the position.

Keizer has been without a city manager since April of 2021, when Chris Eppley, who served in the position for over 20 years, resigned after accidentally discharging a firearm in his office.

After holding close door interviews with the finalists on Feb. 16, the city council went into executive session Wednesday to make a final selection. The council had sole discretion in the hiring but had said previously that they planned to take the opinions of community members and city staff into consideration.

At a Feb. 15 public forum, Brown said that after living in nine states early in life and working in three states professionally, he's grown accustomed to adapting to a new place quickly.

"I've just kind of learned to be adaptable and learned to enjoy something about everywhere I live," Brown said in his introduction.

When asked later in the forum why he

wanted the position, Brown said the two main reasons were to be closer to family and working for a great city like Keizer.

"I can see why those values of spirit and pride and volunteerism are so important. This community has a lot to be proud of. It's an amazing place," Brown said. "And the city's been well run for a long time as far as I can tell."

Brown leaves behind a position in Ontario that's been anything but easy. Last year, the city endured a months-long recall of a city councilor and also an attempt by the mayor to shift hiring power of department heads from the city manager to the city council.

Ontario City Councilor Michael Braden told the Malheur Enterprise that certain elected officials had contributed to a toxic city hall environment, which he believed contributed to Brown's search for a new job.

"There was staff turnover and it greatly

affected Adam because he works to build a family environment for his staff at city hall," said Braden.

Brown said that the past year has been a difficult one and that sometimes it's "good to get remotivated by change."

"I maybe applied for (Keizer's position) out of frustration but I am taking it because it is the right thing for our family," Brown said. "Sometimes it doesn't matter what gets you in the conversation, once you are in it, it comes down if it's the best thing for you."

Brown is expected to begin work in Keizer in early April and will start in time to be part of the city's annual budget process. The city's press release said that Brown's contract is expected to be finalized at the March 7 city council meeting.

Brown's salary in Ontario, according to him, was \$137,000 a year. His salary in Keizer is expected to be between \$130,000 and \$169,000.



Adam Brown (right) sits at an Ontario City Council meeting last year. Brown will leave Ontario in April to take the city manager position in Keizer.

Courtesy of the Malheur Enterprise