

Clerk: 'He called into question the core of my being'

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Ms. Grimes to include me in that decision-making process, as well as county counsel."

Somers quickly placed Kennedy Grimes on paid administrative leave. He fired her in December 2014.

Kennedy Grimes, who traveled from her new home in Ireland for the trial, testified she felt worthless when she was fired.

"He called into question the core of my being as a county clerk and as a public employee," she said. "He said things about me that were not

true and I couldn't say anything about that."

During the three-day trial in Clatsop County Circuit Court, multiple witnesses were called to testify. The witnesses included Clatsop County Board of Commissioners Chairman Scott Lee, Clatsop County Clerk Valerie Crafard, Clatsop County elections technician Sheryl Holcom and former Clatsop County Juvenile Department Director Janet Evans.

Jim Williams, the director of elections for the Secretary of State's Office, also testified.

Communication

Karen Vickers, the county's attorney, described the case as a matter of authority. She pointed out that the clerk is appointed in Clatsop County and reports to the county manager.

Kennedy Grimes was an "at-will" employee who could be fired at any time.

After placing Kennedy Grimes on paid administrative leave, Somers completed an internal investigation, which concluded that the clerk's office did not follow established protocol for proofreading the draft ballots before the election.

His findings detailed issues

with distractions and multitasking. Proofreaders worked individually rather than reading out loud while another proofreader reads along, Somers said.

Andrew Altschul, Kennedy Grimes' attorney, countered that there is no official protocol to follow.

The county's insurance agency will cover the nearly \$440,000 in damages and attorney's fees. The county is reviewing the possibility of appealing the decision.

'Trashing his campsite'

A videotaped deposition of Somers was played during

the trial. In the video, Somers was asked why he wanted to leave Clatsop County for College Park. He admitted he was only planning on living in Astoria for three to five years before moving to a more metropolitan area.

"I really enjoy being in the city much more than the country," he said.

An independent review of county leadership released last July found that the county was operating effectively under Somers, but that some management decisions should have been better explained. Several department directors left the

county during Somers' tenure, and his management style was questioned in anonymous letters to the Board of Commissioners and The Daily Astorian.

In closing arguments at the trial, Altschul said there was nothing wrong with Somers using Clatsop County as a stepping stone along his career path. The attorney compared it to backcountry hiking, where someone pitches their tent for a time, but should leave the campsite pristine for the next camper.

"I do not fault Mr. Somers for temporarily pitching his tent in Astoria," Altschul said. "I fault him for trashing his campsite."

Holtman: The marine garden is always changing

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them know that the best wildlife views might be on the other side of the rock.

"To have one interpreter telling people that can prevent hundreds of people from trampling the marine garden," she said. "It just makes a better experience for everyone."

The marine garden is always changing, Holtman said. In a negative tide, visitors can walk farther out to the needles and see different views. Black oystercatchers will soon establish their nests on one side of the rock.

Dolphins and whales

Holtman's passion for dolphins and whales led her to do field work in both the north Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Northwest, as well as support dolphin and whale conservation efforts throughout the world, such as in Antarctica and Japan. Some whales are "apex predators that have a significant impact on all the other species in the ecosystem," she said.

For months, Holtman worked in the Faroe Islands to address the mass slaughter of pilot whales and dolphins during hunts, which she said is an outdated tradition that needs

to end.

"Whole pods are killed, from the matriarch to the unborn fetuses," she said. "It's very brutal."

Videos of Faroe Islands' "grinds," as the whale killings are called, show water turning red from blood. Although some still view the killings as tradition, many kill the whales for sport.

"There are awesome things about their culture that they can hold onto," Holtman said. "But I think at this point, it's better something like that is left in the history books."

Holtman helped save whales and dolphins with other Sea Shepherd Conservation Society volunteers. In 2014, the organization saved 1,500 pilot whales.

When she isn't standing up for marine mammals and coordinating Haystack Rock volunteers, Holtman enjoys exploring the Pacific Northwest through doing research and hiking.

Moving forward, Holtman said she hopes to study engineering and further her marine conservation work.

"My goal is to build a life that you don't need a vacation from," she said, "so I feel really happy with the work that I'm doing."

—Lyra Fontaine

Change: Timmons has more than 5,200 hours of flying

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The sector includes Air Station Astoria, which flies rescue missions into the Pacific Ocean to the Cascade Mountains. The station received the 2015 Aviation Standardization Excellence Award for those using the MH-60 Jayhawk helicopters.

On Friday, Timmons and Travers walked past friends and family in the hangar to inspect their command, assembled near the bay doors, in front of a collection of helicopters and boats. The sector has performed more than 1,700 search and rescue missions and saved more than 3,000 people during Travers' tenure. Timmons said Travers had set the bar very high and left the sector ready to do great things, and that it was icing on the cake to be receiving his first command from his former compatriot.

Career aviator

Timmons has been an officer in the Coast Guard since 1992 and an aviator since 1994. He has more than 5,200 hours flying out of stations in Florida, Massachusetts, Alaska, Alabama and most recently Astoria. He earned his master's in national secu-

riety and strategic studies from the U.S. Naval War College in 2013 and served two years as chief of the future operations branch of the Coast Guard's Pacific Area Command in California before coming back to Astoria.

He served as executive officer for the Sector Columbia River under Capt. Bruce Jones.

In the front row below the stage sat Travers' family on the left and Timmons' family on the right. Timmons and his wife, Laura, have 18-year-old triplets. His daughters Audrey and Elizabeth are going away to college, while his son Patrick is headed to the U.S. Air Force Academy.

After thanking his family and Travers, Timmons gave his first commands to the sector: work hard, be nice and do the right thing.

All about people

While the things he's done will fade over time, Travers said, he'll always remember the people he worked with, from the high school nurse who first told him about the Coast Guard to the men and women of Sector Columbia River, who he has repeatedly called his greatest command ever.

Rear Adm. Richard Gromlich, the soon-retiring commander of the Pacific Northwest's District 13 overseeing Sector Columbia River, helped change command and say goodbye to Travers.

Gromlich said Travers had overseen high-profile cases such as the vessel Sparna, which grounded in the Columbia River, to close misses such as a vessel that nearly crashed at the entrance to Grays Harbor, Washington, in foul weather.

Most notable was clearing "kayaktivists" from the Willamette River after they and others hanging from the St. Johns Bridge in Portland tried to block the Royal Dutch Shell icebreaker Fenica from leaving Portland to support an oil rig exploring the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. Throughout it all, he said, his men and women showed the utmost professionalism.

"We caught lightning in a bottle the last two years," he said. "It was fun."

Upon his retirement, Travers received a shadow box full of military mementos from throughout his career, a meritorious service award

for his time with the sector, a letter of appreciation from President Barack Obama and a triangularly-folded American flag. He gave his son, Benjamin, an incoming senior at the University of Michigan readying for medical school, his first hat in the Coast Guard, along with flowers to his wife C.C. and daughters Kirsten and Jenna.

Here for advice

Travers reminded Timmons that he has three predecessors nearby to seek advice. Gromlich joked that the Coast Guard should stop sending its best and brightest to Astoria, where Travers is the third successive sector commander to retire, after Jones and Capt. Doug Kaup. Adm. Edward Nelson, who commanded the sector from 1971 to 1974, also retired locally.

Jones started choppering ship pilots to passing vessels for Brim Aviation, which is located a few hundred feet from the Coast Guard at the Astoria Regional Airport. Travers will work next door to Jones, managing the Warrenton base and flying for air medevac company Life Flight Network.

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