

# Environmental commissioners defied governor's orders, fired

By **PARIS ACHEN**  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Three former state environmental quality commissioners say they were fired Wednesday by Gov. Kate Brown because they defied the governor in selecting a director for the Department of Environmental Quality.

Commissioners kept the Governor's Office informed every step of the way in their search for a new director, but Gov. Brown did not make her wishes known until the "eleventh hour," former commission Chairwoman Colleen Johnson wrote in a statement.

"She went so far as to suggest that any decision contrary to her wishes could have negative consequences," Johnson wrote.

The three commissioners — Johnson and Morgan Rider and Melinda Eden — received a phone call early Wednesday informing them of Brown's decision. The governor's news release on the change included the names of her nominees to replace the three commissioners, indicating the decision had been in the works for some time.

"After the past two years, it has become clear to Gov. Brown that the Environmental Quality Commission has not been able meet new challenges and implement policies that protect Oregonian's air and water resources," said Bryan Hockaday, a spokesman in Brown's office. "It is critical to Gov. Brown that leadership of the agency ensures DEQ achieves this mission."

The commission selected Brown's natural resources adviser, Richard Whitman, as DEQ director Feb. 15, following a national search.

Whitman, who had been adviser to Gov. John Kitzhaber, then Brown, had served as interim director since October. That month, former Director Dick Pedersen resigned amid scandal over the agency's response to heavy metal emissions in the Portland area.

The governor asserted that the process for hiring the director "did not signal a collaborative approach that will lead to significant improvements in the operations at DEQ," Hockaday said.

"Gov. Brown is confident in Richard Whitman's ability to guide DEQ, and by appointing new members to the EQC to support his leadership, she looks forward to a more collaborative and transparent approach to DEQ's policy and rule making process."

Johnson defended the commission's process for selecting the director.

"We take extreme pride in the way those searches were conducted — open, impartial, and always informed by our judgment of what was best for the state and DEQ," Johnson wrote. "After considerable time, effort, and deliberation, including a self-imposed two-week delay to thoroughly and carefully consider the comments from the Governor's



AP Photo/Don Ryan

**Gov. Kate Brown speaks during her State of the State address in Portland in 2015. The governor has fired three members of the state Environmental Quality Commission.**

Office, the commission unanimously decided to hire Richard Whitman. Unfortunately, Gov. Brown seems to feel that despite the clear language of (Oregon statute), the decision about the new director was really hers to make."

She said the governor "is now trying to distance herself from the idea that our firing has anything to do with the decisions about whom to hire as a director, rather saying it was the process that concerned her."

Yet Commissioners Sam Baraso and Ed Armstrong will remain on the commission, Johnson noted.

Brown has nominated

Kathleen George, a member of the Grande Ronde Tribal Council; Wade Mosby, a founding member of the Forest Stewardship Council; and Molly Kile, an associate professor at Oregon State University, to replace them. If confirmed by the Senate April 26, they will start their new positions May 3.

The governor believes her new picks will bring new perspectives to the commission and work more collaboratively with her office, Hockaday said.

*The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.*

# Local law enforcement claims Warrenton man threatened police

By **JACK HEFFERNAN**  
The Daily Astorian

Law enforcement officials are requesting that a man who led police on a brief chase and then ran into his apartment Sunday night not be released from jail.

Warrenton Police Chief Mathew Workman and Clatsop County Sheriff Tom Bergin contacted the District Attorney's Office saying Edward Frederick Gates Sr., 38, of Warrenton, made threats to kill police during the incident.

Workman said he makes such a request whenever a suspect threatens to kill police in order to give them more time to decompress. Both Gates and the passenger in the car — Isaac Daniel Lyons, 23, of Warrenton — were listed on the county jail roster as of Thursday afternoon.

Warrenton Police Officer Tyler Johnston attempted to

pull Gates over Sunday after he allegedly did not come to a complete stop while pulling out of the Super Mart parking lot on South Main Avenue. He then drove to an apartment building on Southwest Cedar Avenue.

When they reached the complex, Gates fled up to the second floor. Lyons, meanwhile, stayed in the parking lot.

Once backup arrived, police arrested Lyons and charged him with resisting arrest and interfering with a police officer. He pleaded not guilty at an arraignment Monday.

Gates eventually surrendered himself to police more than 1 1/2 hours after they arrived at the apartment complex. He was indicted earlier this week on seven charges, including second-degree escape, resisting arrest and recklessly endangering another person. "It was quite a fiasco," Workman said.

Gates said at his first

arraignment Monday that he is filing a complaint with the American Civil Liberties Union over his treatment by police.

He is also facing harassment and disorderly conduct charges stemming from a case earlier this month involving his girlfriend.

Circuit Court Judge Cindee Matyas ordered that Gates have no contact with his girlfriend, who was in the courtroom at the time. Gates, appearing from jail through video, expressed his frustration with the decision and became visibly upset. Matyas asked to Gates calm down or she would end the arraignment.

"I'm not going to calm down," Gates said.

Matyas then ended the arraignment. Gates threw documents at the screen and stood up, telling deputies not to touch him before the video disconnected.

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