

# JUDGE: DOJ confirmed there is an ongoing investigation into Perry

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hearings as well as chairing the county commissioners. He came under fire at a public meeting April 27 where seven county officials — Treasurer Sandra Speer, Clerk Barbara Sitton, Assessor Donald Cossitt, Justice of the Peace Robin Ordway, Sheriff Chris Humphreys and fellow commissioners Lynn Morley and Robert Ordway — submitted letters calling on him to resign. They cited “serious allegations,” but did not go into details.

The matter has since been referred to the Oregon Department of Justice for further investigation.

A petition to recall Perry was filed in July by Steve Speer, the husband of Sandra Speer, which shed some light on the allegations. In his reasons for demanding a recall, Speer stated there were “excessive situations needing litigation” while Perry served as head of human resources. The result was thousands of dollars in fees and settlements, Speer wrote.

The petition also accused Perry of having an inappropriate relationship with an employee he supervised earlier this year. Both he and the employee, Economic Development Director Patti Jaeger, have denied they did anything inappropriate during that time. Perry said he supervised Jaeger for less than a month before she was reassigned under Commissioner Morley

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— Patrick C. Perry, former Wheeler County Judge

at the same April 27 meeting. Finally, the petition stated that Perry had ordered a raise for another county employee by garnishing his own wages, but never followed through on reducing his salary. Perry called the claims vague and unfounded.

On Tuesday, Perry said he was shocked by how lopsided the recall was. He defended his time in office, saying he tried to do what was right for the county with a limited budget.

“I just happened to have two-thirds of those voters stirred up,” he said.

Perry admitted some people may not be comfortable with his relationship with Jaeger. The two of them are now living together, he said, though their friendship was strictly platonic when he was her supervisor. Perry is 50 years old and Jaeger is 21.

“Some people probably think it’s a little amoral that I’m with such a young gal, I guess,” he said.

In addition, Perry said some residents were not happy when he cut back the county’s road department due to budget restrictions. He also supported a 58,000-acre wilderness area surrounding the Painted Hills, which Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley proposed in Congress

last year. “There was some anti sentiment about that,” Perry said.

Perry will continue to live in Wheeler County, he said, and did not rule out a return to politics in the future. A spokeswoman for the DOJ confirmed there is an ongoing investigation into Perry, but was not able to provide more information.

Sheriff Humphreys said he could not discuss the matter directly, but said he is glad the county can move forward.

“It’s not a fun process,” Humphreys said. “We had done a lot of good work together, and you hate to see something like this happen.”

Steve Speer could not be reached for comment Tuesday. Commissioner Morley declined comment, and Commissioner Ordway did not return a phone message.

Perry is the third elected official in Eastern Oregon to face a recall this summer. Harney County Judge Steve Grasty survived his recall attempt, while a recall for Grant County Commissioner Boyd Britton was held Tuesday.

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# STICKERS: Team of six will approach businesses one by one

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a microbrew didn’t seem to notice the new sticker, but it sent a message to those who glanced its way. The establishment is an early adopter of PFLAG Pendleton’s effort to place the window clings.

“I think it’s important that we support the LGBT community,” owner Carol Hanks said.

The group, formerly known as Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, is just starting to canvass members of the Pendleton business community.

“We want to line the streets with these beautiful stickers,” said PFLAG member Vickie Read. “We’re not out to make people feel uncomfortable. We want to make people more comfortable. That’s what this is all about.”

Carolyn Frasier is on a team of six that will approach businesses one by one. She expects most owners to participate, though not all, basing her expectations on the reaction the group got in the past when asking businesses to hang signs for Portland Gay Men’s Chorus concerts.

“I’ve always been amazed. Most people in Pendleton are quite welcoming,” Frasier said. “Over the years there’s only been a couple who have been disrespectful.”

Others declined to hang the posters for religious reasons, but remained courteous about it. Frasier said she doesn’t sweat those times.

“I do feel it’s everybody’s choice,” she said. “I don’t get all upset when people tell me no.”

She expects much the same reaction for requests to display the “Everybody Welcome” stickers.

PFLAG members debated about the barcode connecting to ORS 659A.403, but finally agreed to include it as a way

to educate the public about the law, Read said. Law varies by state. While Oregon’s law bars discrimination for any reason, other states, such as Mississippi, passed religious freedom laws that protect “sincerely held religious beliefs or moral convictions.” Oregon’s law has no such caveats. A Gresham bakery, Sweet Cakes by Melissa, paid \$135,000 in fines last year after refusing because of religious beliefs to bake a wedding cake for a lesbian couple.

Though Oregon law prohibits overt discrimination, getting a warm welcome is still not a slam dunk for a same-sex couple, said Tracy Bosen, a gay man and PFLAG member who co-owns the Pendleton House Bed & Breakfast.

“Typically, most travelers are welcome everywhere,” he said. “However, our society is rapidly becoming less welcoming to those that belong to certain religions, cultures, sexual orientations or display other differences.”

He encouraged business owners who might be on the fence about displaying a sticker to go ahead and participate.

“I understand that a business owner may hesitate to display support,” Bosen said. “However, your concerns will evaporate each time someone comes in and quietly thanks you.”

Read said the campaign is a way to show that a small town in Eastern Oregon can welcome diversity and show hospitality to all.

“We know this is a welcoming community,” she said.

Local artist Jason Hogge designed the window cling. DG Gifts and Master Printers supplied production services. Both businesses display the stickers on their front windows.

Contact Kathy Aney at [kaney@eastoregonian.com](mailto:kaney@eastoregonian.com) or call 541-966-0810.

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