



Denison mayor resigns prior to recall vote

By Ann Marie Bush
ann.bush@cjonline.com

Denison Mayor Audrey Oliverius, who faced a voter recall in less than two weeks, has resigned.



Oliverius

A petition for the recall of Oliverius was received by Jackson County Clerk Kathy Mick on May 12. The petition was validated after 29 signatures were collected from registered Denison voters. Twelve signatures were needed.

The petition states Oliverius on March 10 called an executive session at the end of a regularly scheduled city council meeting. She dismissed the public and the city clerk from the meeting. On April 3, the Denison city clerk received an email from the mayor telling the city clerk what to add to the March 10 minutes for the executive session, the petition states.

"This record shows that a motion was made and a vote was taken in executive ses-

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Mayor: Resignation letter blames attitude of residents

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sion," the petition states.

The action is a violation of the Kansas Open Meetings Act, according to the petition.

In Oliverius' resignation letter obtained Wednesday by The Topeka Capital-Journal, she said "it has become clearly apparent to me that three of the city council members and several community members are not ready for a positive change in the town."

The letter is dated Monday.

"It is the job of the mayor and the city council members to manage the assets of the City, enforce policies and enforce the city ordinances equally and fairly to all," Oliverius said in the resignation letter. "This has not been happening and your actions have proven you are not interested in doing what is best for the community. For example, you do not want to properly manage the City's assets; you do not want to enforce the personnel policies; nor are you willing to enforce the ordinances fairly to all residents."

The vote in March was to appoint someone to the vacant city council seat. There are five council seats, and at that time, one was vacant.

Voters will still vote on the recall because advance voting already has started, Mick said.

A special meeting is slated for 7 p.m. Monday, said Denison Councilwoman Marilyn Seeger. Council president Bruce Sweany will become the acting mayor, she said, and council members also plan to fill Sweany's council seat and the vacant position.

"It has been awful," Seeger said about the past few months.

Seeger said she worked well with Oliverius when Oliverius served as a city council member. Oliverius was named mayor about two years ago after the previous mayor died. After Oliverius was named mayor, she changed, Seeger said.

Council members Seeger, Sweany and Harold McAlexander signed the petition of recall. Oliverius' brother-in-law, Terry Oliverius, is a council member. He didn't sign the petition.

Seeger also will be leaving the city council because she is moving to Holton, which will leave another vacancy.

Problems began about 11 months ago when Audrey Oliverius mentioned the city was spending more than it brought in each month, she said in previous Capital-Journal articles.

Denison had two full-time city employees — a city clerk and a utility supervisor — who received pay and benefits. Oliverius, who works as the accounting director for Atchison Hospital, said she proposed looking at ways to save money, including combining the two positions into one or eliminating both.

In April, the city's office was closed because the city clerk, city treasurer and utility supervisor all resigned.

The city offices reopened briefly when the city hired a new clerk. However, the clerk resigned after serving a short time, said Vickie Wold, who is the signature sponsor of the petition.

Attempts to reach Oliverius weren't successful

Wednesday. However, in Oliverius' resignation letter, she said she is "ashamed for the town and its people" because the new city clerk/treasurer was "run off by a council member, former employee and community members."

"Their harassment and statements were too much to handle. ... (Y)ou should quit because once Audrey is gone, things are going back to the way they were," Oliverius wrote. "You'll be fired, and we'll hire the former employees back. I did what I could to keep a positive atmosphere around her, but was overpowered by the hatred of the old ways."

Oliverius asked that the state election department and Jackson County election department "perform an audit of the city of Denison" and that an outside firm perform an audit on the city's records.

"I wish the community well and hope that happiness and peace finds its way back into the hearts and homes of everyone," she wrote.

Wold said she is glad voters will be able to have their voices heard Aug. 5.

"We will still vote," she said. "It will still be recorded. There's a lot to be fixed. We have quite a mess at city hall."

Contact Ann Marie Bush at (785) 295-1207 or @AnnieScribe on Twitter.

