

SOUTHEAST MISSOURIAN

Miner, Mo., board seeks to impeach, oust police chief

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By Mark Bliss ~ Southeast Missourian



Christopher Griggs

Aldermen in Miner, Missouri, have filed articles of impeachment against the city's police chief in an effort to remove him from office.

The aldermen accused Police Chief Christopher Griggs of bullying city employees, having an "explicit sexual video" of his wife on his office computer, refusing the board's order to reinstate a police department employee and failing to work 40 hours a week.

The four-member board will hold a hearing at 6 p.m. March 11 in Miner's city courtroom on the impeachment charges, city clerk Darrin Skinner said Thursday. Griggs has been invited to attend the hearing.

After the hearing, board members will vote on whether to remove Griggs from office, Skinner said.

If Griggs is ousted, Skinner said, the board must appoint a new chief to serve out the remainder of Griggs' elected term.

The board's action comes amid a legal battle with Griggs, who has served as police chief since 2010, and the resignation of Mayor Darren Chapman.

According to the four-count articles of impeachment, Griggs is required by city ordinance to work a minimum of 40 hours a week and be on call at all times.

"Chief Griggs' failure to cover a shift and work his required 40 hours has put a strain on the city of Miner and its police officers. The 'overtime' compensation, which is a direct result of this willful refusal of Chief Griggs, is causing a strain on the city of Miner's financial budget," the impeachment document states.

Griggs used his city computer for personal business, city officials alleged.

According to the impeachment articles, Grigg's computer hard drive was confiscated and turned over to Forensic Computer Services of St. Louis in December.

The investigation found a sexual video had been deleted from the computer. The forensic work recovered the video, according to the impeachment articles.

"Conduct of this nature is in direct violation of the employee handbook and reflect poorly on the Miner Police Department and the city as a whole," the impeachment document states.

Griggs also refused to reinstate police department employee Laura Adams, the impeachment articles state.

In a meeting between Griggs and Adams, where he fired her a third time, the chief stated this is "his police department," according to the document.

Griggs directly violated a "lawful command" in not reinstating Adams, the impeachment document states.

Adams had worked as a dispatcher for the Miner Police Department. According to the impeachment charges, Griggs suspended Adams' privileges to use the state law enforcement records system because "he believed she was running license plates for her brother-in-law without justification and in violation of the terms of her employment."

But the impeachment document adds after further investigation by the city, no wrongdoing was found on the part of Adams.

The document alleges Griggs bullied a number of city employees. Among other things, he is accused of attempting to have criminal charges filed against Adams and the city clerk.

Last November, Griggs filed a lawsuit against board members Bill James, Frank Tatum, Renee Clark and Michelle Farmer, as well as Skinner and MCP Investigations & Security of Cape Girardeau. The security company was hired in conjunction with a board-ordered investigation of Griggs.

The suit alleged the board of the small Scott County town bordering Sikeston, Missouri, has interfered with his authority as the city's elected police chief and city officials falsely accused him of impropriety.

Griggs also said in the suit his daily duties have been hindered by the board-ordered removal of a computer containing confidential information, including information on criminal investigations.

He accused city officials of violating his "protected constitutional and privacy rights."

The chief did not respond to a phone call made by the Southeast Missourian to the police department Thursday.

But in January, Griggs told the Sikeston Standard Democrat newspaper Miner city officials had not allowed him to do his job and they "completely overstepped their boundaries."

Griggs described the actions of city officials as "unnecessary political warfare."

Chapman issued a statement in resigning as mayor in January. According to the Sikeston newspaper, Chapman stated "it is clear with recent events that the board does not have the city's best interest in mind and I no longer wish to take part in the direction the city is headed."

Chapman added, "I disagree with everything that is going on. I tried to better the city and get the city to a better place. I didn't have a personal agenda. There has just been a lot of frustration."

Alderman James, who is mayor pro-tem, sent a letter to Griggs earlier this week, notifying him of the impeachment process.

James wrote the board had considered complaints against Griggs.

An investigation found "evidence of malfeasance," James wrote.

The aldermen, according to James, instructed city attorney Tabatha Thurman to draft articles of impeachment "after careful deliberation of the evidence."

According to the letter, the aldermen brought these charges "as a last resort and are deeply saddened to implement this action."

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