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Bixby city manager suspended

BY TIM STANLEY World Staff Writer
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BIXBY — City Manager Micky Webb was suspended with pay Wednesday by the City Council after he accused the council last week of violating the city charter and the state's open meeting law.

The council voted 5-0 for the suspension during a special meeting Wednesday morning but declined to give any reason.

Webb's attorney, Christopher Camp, provided a letter to the Tulsa World that Camp said may have precipitated the decision. In the letter, sent April 30 to the councilors and Tulsa County District Attorney Tim Harris, Webb accused the council of ordering him during an April 27 executive session to fire several employees, which he said violates the city charter.

Webb also believes that the council violated the state's Open Meeting Act because none of the alleged requests was listed on the meeting notice or agenda.

"It was improper for them to ask him to do that, and then the way it was carried out violated the act," Camp said.

"The timing of the suspension is suspect, coming just days after the letter."

Employees whom Webb alleges he was directed to dismiss include City Clerk Cheryl Sasser and Assistant City Manager Mike Webster.

Sasser was scheduled for a pre-disciplinary hearing April 30, Webb's letter notes.

Webb wrote that he was not considering Sasser for dismissal because "any alleged misconduct does not rise to an offense warranting immediate termination" and because of her exemplary service record.

City Attorney Phil Frazier would not comment on the reason for Webb's suspension, calling it a

personnel matter.

He said he did not know when further action would be taken. "I'm sure there are other matters to look at before moving ahead with the process," he said.

Mayor Ray Bowen and Councilors Steve Sutton and Steve Todoroff, declined to comment on the suspension or the accusations, referring all inquiries to Frazier.

"The city attorney needs to handle any questions related to legal issues for the city," Sutton said.

Harris said the District Attorney's Office plans no investigation at present but added that it would send a letter to the city councilors, calling their attention to the allegations and the pertinent laws.

In a letter following the April 27 executive session, Frazier warned the council about protocol for executive sessions and attached a copy of the state's Open Meeting Act.

Frazier wrote that he had been "somewhat lax in letting the conversation in executive session go beyond the (designated) subject matter. I ask your understanding and patience as I become more concerned about wandering from the agenda items."

Frazier said Wednesday, however, that it is his policy to send advisory letters about the rules to the council every time new councilors come on board.

Sutton and Councilor John Easton were elected in April, and their first council meeting was April 27.

The city charter states: "Neither the council, the mayor, nor any of its other members may direct or request the appointment of any person to, or his removal from, office or employment by the city manager."

The council discussed the suspension in executive session before returning to regular session to vote. City Treasurer Becky Byers was appointed the acting city manager.

Webb, who did not return calls Wednesday, has been the city manager for 16 years.

Camp said Webb's contract with the city was renewed in March and would be effective through June 30, 2010. Under the agreement, the city may only terminate Webb "for good cause shown," Camp said.

Bixby City Council

- Mayor Ray Bowen, Ward 4.
First elected 2006. Term expires 2010.
- Vice Mayor Dennis Loudermilk, Ward 5.
First elected 2008. Term expires 2012.

- Steve Todoroff, Ward .
First elected 1981. Term expires 2011.
- John Easton, Ward 1.
First elected in April, defeating incumbent Joe Williams. Term expires 2013.
- Steve Sutton, Ward 2.
First elected in april, defeating incumbent Tom Daniels. Term expires 2013.