

West Covina City Manager Fires Fire Chief Vincent Capelle



West Covina Fire Chief Vincent Capelle
By George Ogden

WEST COVINA - On Wednesday, November 27, West Covina Fire Chief Vincent Capelle was fired by the city, and both Capelle and a city official confirmed this. Capelle stated that on Tuesday, Nov. 26, he was given a notice of separation by the city.

Capelle stated, "I was blindsided and completely shocked". Mayor Brian Calderon Tabatabai said he received an email from City Manager Paulina Morales on Tuesday, which indicated she fired him. Tabatabai stated he spoke with Morales and he was told Capelle had been given termination papers and that the city manager had lost trust in the chief.

Morales stated that there was no comment.

It has been reported that Tabatabai said Capelle had been a target of Mayor Pro Tem Tony Wu since an incident where back in Aug. 9, 2022, when Wu allegedly yelled at Capelle at a public event. State Sen. Josh Newman did not speak at the ceremony and Newman had made it clear that he did not want to speak at the

event, however, Wu still wanted him to speak. According to a Human Resources memorandum dated Aug. 9, 2022, Wu shouted at Capelle, "Don't you ever (expletive) disrespect me again!"

"I was not surprised," stated Tabatabai about what had happened. "There's a cruelty to this to do it the Tuesday before Thanksgiving."

Capelle worked on a grant which was presented at the Tuesday, Nov. 19, City Council meeting. The council voted 3-1-1, with Letty Lopez-Viado abstaining and Tabatabai voting no on a motion to decline a SAFER grant, which would have funded 15 new firefighter positions for 3 years. However the concern was, the number weren't there and what happens after 3 years. The next day he was fired.

The well-liked chief did a lot for the fire department and for the city.

Most likely this will result in another multimillion-dollar lawsuit against the city. Over the past few years, the city has been sued for millions of dollars by former employees.