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Former Moraga town manager cleared of wrongdoing

By Nick Marnell



Jill Keimach Photo provided

Jill Keimach, the former Moraga town manager, was exonerated by the Alameda County District Attorney's Office following a six-month investigation into the legality of a secret audio recording Keimach made of an Aug. 16, 2017 meeting with two Alameda city council members, Jim Oddie and Malia Vella, while Keimach was the Alameda city manager.

It is illegal in California to record a conversation without permission of all parties, but state law permits the recording of confidential communications for the purpose of obtaining evidence reasonably believed to relate to the commission of certain criminal conduct. The DA investigation concluded that Keimach did not break any laws, having had a reasonable belief going into the meeting that Oddie and Vella, a Teamsters lawyer, would attempt to bribe or extort her.

"I am extremely grateful to the District Attorney's Office for its careful examination of all the facts in this case and concluding that I told the truth in the face of extreme political pressure," Keimach said in a statement. "I paid a steep professional price but am relieved and heartened that the facts have finally come to light."

Keimach's saga began in July 2017 when the city of Alameda began a recruitment process to find a new fire chief for the Alameda Fire Department. Keimach, in charge of making the selection, asserted that she was under extreme political pressure from elected and appointed city officials to choose Capt. Domenick Weaver, the internal candidate favored by the firefighters union, and felt that her continued employment as city manager was in peril if she did not comply.

Oddie and Vella scheduled the Aug. 16, 2017 meeting with Keimach to discuss the selection of the fire chief. As Keimach believed that the two council members might try to pressure her, she taped the meeting on her cell phone without consent of the parties. The DA investigation concluded that neither Oddie nor Vella committed any criminal offenses at that meeting, but that Keimach's belief that recording the meeting may have gathered evidence related to criminal conduct was not unreasonable considering all of the circumstances.

Keimach stood firm and appointed outside candidate Edmund Rodriguez as the city of Alameda fire chief on Oct. 3, 2017. She was put on administrative leave in March and departed the city in May under a \$945,000 separation agreement.

"I am relieved," Keimach said. "This was such a huge weight on me for such a long time." Neither Oddie nor Vella responded to a request for comment.

Keimach returns from a three-week vacation to India in mid-November, and she was mum about her future plans. "I'm weighing my options," she said.

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