

ORANGE COUNTY NEWS

Mayor says it's time for Anaheim to focus on residents as much as tourists after city manager's resignation



Mayor Tom Tait quiets the crowd during the Anaheim City Council meeting in 2015. The council has grown by two members since then and meetings are often several hours long. (File photo by Kevin Sullivan, Orange County Register/SCNG)

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A couple of weeks after City Manager [Paul Emery was asked to resign](#), Mayor Tom Tait defended his and his three colleagues' decision to let him go.

"We were looking for a change in direction," Tait told the Anaheim Bulletin. "This is a strong pivot toward the neighborhoods."

Despite the city having a healthy outlook for the past several years, the City Council's four-strong voting bloc, dubbed The People's Council, shook up City Hall by letting go of the top administrator of Orange County's largest city and its \$1.7 billion budget.

Emery served as an interim city manager 16 months prior to being appointed in 2015. He was making \$290,000 annually when a 4-3 vote asked for his resignation during a closed-session meeting on July 11. Tait and council members Jose Moreno, Denise Barnes and James Vanderbilt voted in favor. Council members Lucille Kring, Kris Murray and Stephen Faessel voted against the resignation.

Former City Clerk Linda Andal will now serve as interim city manager. Theresa Bass, previously assistant city clerk, is now acting city clerk. Tait did not discuss how the city will find a permanent replacement for city manager.

"Linda is going to step in, and we're going to see how it goes," he said.

Emery could not be reached for comment.

Murray, who had long championed Emery, said his forced resignation "will handicap the city and makes it challenging to govern effectively."

Emery is the fourth city manager to have resigned since 2010.

"Paul has run and provided steady leadership in a tumultuous time, has balanced the budget, reduced our pension liability, restored our fire and police staffing to pre-recession levels and he was instrumental in our homeless program and made extraordinary investments, and prioritized community centers" across city parks, Murray said.

"This makes it incredibly hard to recruit qualified individuals, who may be at risk of losing their job if they go against the council majority," she added.

Councilman Faessel said he was baffled with the mayor and the other three colleagues' decision.

"We hired 40 officers in four years, the city budget is balanced and stronger than years past," Faessel said. "Paul is responsible for a great deal with that."

Tait said he disagreed with a lot of Emery's recommendations.

Specifically, Tait said he was against Emery's recommendation to extend a moratorium on a [Disneyland gate tax](#) in exchange for Disney spending up to \$1.5 billion in upgrades at its Anaheim theme parks; and a recommendation to [award an estimated \\$550 million in future hotel transient-occupancy tax](#) to Disney and the Wincome Group for the development of three four-diamond hotels in the resort district; tax revenue from the new hotels would cover the awards.

"We can't sustain the economy that we've restructured when there is a widening of the haves and the have nots," said Moreno, who voted for Emery to resign. "When the City Council, through the city manager's recommendation, gives away \$750 million in future tax revenues ... it was time to pivot so that neighborhoods get equal attention as the ones visiting here.

"We've invested in the children of tourists, it's time to invest in the children of Anaheim," Moreno said.

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