

NEWS

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Board moves forward with Postmus investigation

During a special meeting called to address mounting concerns about Assessor Bill Postmus, the Board of Supervisors today unanimously directed County Counsel to identify an outside law firm that would conduct an investigation to determine whether the board has legal grounds to remove Postmus from office.

County Counsel was directed to return to the board with a recommendation on Tuesday, Jan. 27. The board also directed that the selected law firm present a progress report on the investigation on March 3.

"I appreciate the public's impatience to have this matter resolved as quickly as possible, and I share that sentiment," Board of Supervisors Chairman Gary C. Ovitt said today. "However, it is my belief the board has an obligation to ensure that whatever action the board eventually takes will stand up to all legal scrutiny, is legally defensible, solid, and therefore irreversible."

In asking the board to move forward with the investigation, Chairman Ovitt cited a long list of issues involving Postmus, starting with the serving of a search warrant at the Assessor's Office in April 2008. Chairman Ovitt also mentioned a grand jury report that cited irresponsible hiring practices and the unauthorized use of county resources for political campaign activities in the Assessor's Office, and the subsequent arrest of then-Assistant Assessor Adam Aleman on felony charges alleging the preparation of false evidence, destruction of public records, and the provision of false evidence to the grand jury.

Chairman Ovitt also discussed a statement the Assessor made on Jan. 6 admitting to a drug addiction but claiming he had conquered it, and his arrest nine days later following the alleged discovery of drugs and drug paraphernalia at his home.

"The board's primary obligation to the public is to ensure the effective operation of all county departments. The County Charter and County Code creates a clear responsibility for the board to ensure that elected department heads such as the Assessor abide by professional and ethical standards," Chairman Ovitt said.