

Fitzhugh fired! mayor resigns!

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Reporter

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Though the Douglas City Council's surprise 3-2 vote to terminate City Administrator Bobbe Fitzhugh's contract took only moments to be ratified Monday night, the vacancy at the top post leaves much to be decided in the coming months.

The council's vote to terminate Fitzhugh came following more than an hour of deliberation in closed executive session July 27. Mayor Jim Schneider resigned immediately after the vote and threw his council folder into the trash can on his way out.

Council members Bob Chiapuzio, Kathy Russell and Tony Reynolds voted to terminate Fitzhugh's contract immediately. Mayor Jim Schneider and Councilman Marilyn Werner voted against the termination in the roll call vote. Fitzhugh, who has been administrator for 16 years, took her name placard from the council dais as she left the building after the vote.

The council briefly reconvened following the executive session to vote. Schneider and Chiapuzio also commented just before the voting.

"I've worked with Bobbe for 10 years on the council," Schneider said. "The last two have been the worst of the 10. She has always done the job we asked her to do. We've set the goals and given her the money to do it and let her accomplish the job. She has done it.

"Right now we are micromanaging. We're doing everything possible to make it miserable. And as I've stated before I'd go to meetings and the City of Douglas was always ahead of the curve. Right now, we're behind the curve because we've demanded services of the staff other than what they're assigned to do.

"It's very disappointing to me, but I'm only one of the council. This is the worse thing that could happen."

Chiapuzio said Fitzhugh had told the council she considered resigning in the past and that her actions were inappropriate in his view.

"She said if we wanted her resignation we could have it but certain staff were going to leave with her," Chiapuzio said. "I take that as a threat. I don't think the City of Douglas should have to tolerate that. It's not an easy position although it's a decision I'm firm on."

In a further surprise, Schneider announced his immediate resignation as mayor following Fitzhugh's termination, leaving Werner as interim mayor.