

Bryant out

City:

City attorney resigns; council approves separation deal with over \$300K in compensation

CITY

City Attorney Jeff Bryant has tendered his resignation. Mack Burke
Bryant’s 32-year career with the city will officially Transcript News Editor @MackBurke4
come to an end on Feb. 28, but he will relinquish the
title of city attorney on Dec. 31.

In the months that follow, he will be available to assist
the city with the transition and serve as a consultant on
special assignments at the request of the city manager.

The city council approved a separation agreement at
Tuesday’s

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From Page A1 special session. According to the
agreement, Bryant will be paid the equivalent of 15
months salary and benefits calculated as follows (gross
amount): Base Salary — \$205,596.81

Longevity — \$3,960.00 Retirement Contribution —
\$17,812.23

Car Allowance — \$4,500.00

Health Dental & Life Insurance — \$19,982.55

Life Insurance — \$1,552.50 The city also agreed to
pay Bryant at the next regular pay day after Feb. 28 the
following amounts representing unused leave: 480
hours of Vacation Leave — \$37,956.62

720 hours of Sick Leave — \$56,934.94

80 hours of compensatory time — \$6,326.10 In
addition, the city agreed to pay up to \$10,000 for his
attorney’s fees related to the negotiations.

The agreement brings to close a hushed political saga
that escalated over the fall in coincidence with the

other, will not encourage others to do so, and will not
participate, directly or indirectly, in such action by any
third party.”

Rather than engage in a potentially lengthy and costly
investigative process, the city council opted to come to
an agreement, but two council members — Robert
Castleberry and Mayor Lynne Miller — opposed the
decision to oust Bryant.

“While the legal structure of the agreement protects the
city, it is fiscally irresponsible,” Castleberry said. “I do
not think any of us would make this deal in our
business or out of our own checkbook.”

Bryant has served as city attorney since 2004, and,
according to a statement from the city manager’s
office, resigned on good terms with the city.

“During his tenure, Mr. Bryant performed his duties
consistent with the City of Norman City Charter, Code
of Ordinances and polices and procedures consistent
with the laws of the State of Oklahoma and of the
United States,” the statement reads. “During his tenure
as City Attorney, the City of Norman Legal
Department was recognized as one of the most
respected Municipal Law Departments in the State.”

controversial University North Park arena proposal.

Though nearly all details were kept private through executive session, some council members publicly expressed waning faith in the city attorney for what they perceived as communication failures and non-transparent dealings on behalf of the city.

Former City Manager Steve Lewis reached a separation agreement in August after being forced out by the city council over frustrations concerning staffing decisions and other systemic issues.

Unlike the city manager, Bryant was not a direct employee of the council. But he too faced mounting political pressure with the city council exploring the possibility of investigating him for undisclosed reasons.

Those conversations began in August and continued to pop up during executive sessions throughout the fall. In late October, the council began to consider possible changes to the city charter to bring the city attorney position under the direct purview of the city council to increase oversight.

Such a change would require a vote of the people. That's still a possibility, but Tuesday's decision marked the end of any potential investigation into Bryant's activities as city attorney.

The agreement also precludes Bryant from taking any legal action against the city.

"The parties acknowledge that this Agreement constitutes an amicable and complete resolution of any disputes between them related to the employment relationship and the separation of that relationship," the agreement states. "The agreement of the City to the terms and conditions of this Agreement does not constitute an admission of any violation of any state or federal law or regulation.

"The parties agree that they will refrain from making any comments or statements of a derogatory nature concerning each

Bryant did not offer details on his future plans, but said he intends to continue to practice law. In Bryant's resignation letter, he reflected on his decades of employment with the city and praised the work of his colleagues.

"Work with the City of Norman Legal Department has been fulfilling in many ways," his letter reads. "One of the greatest joys has been working with such talented Lawyers over the years. The current Legal Staff ranks among the best I have worked with and certainly one of the most talented set of municipal law attorneys across the state. I have no doubt the City's legal needs will continue to be well served for years to come.

"It has been a wonderful career. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help you in this period of transition. Again, thank you and the current City Council for accommodating the Separation Agreement that will help provide a smooth transition not only for the City, but also for me and my family."



Norman City Attorney Jeff Bryant listens during the State of the City address Sept. 25 at city hall. On Tuesday, the city council approved a separation agreement with the longtime city attorney.

Kyle Phillips / The Transcript