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Police chief leading city in interim

By Terri Morgan
Special to the Mercury News

The Scotts Valley City Council has named an interim city manager, and his first assignment is to find his permanent replacement.

Scotts Valley Police Chief Steve Walpole will serve temporarily as city manager, replacing August Caires, who resigned Tuesday, citing personal reasons.

Caires' departure follows the resignation last week of the city's public works director. The mayor and a city councilman also have resigned in the last year.

"All the decisions were separately made," City Councilwoman Gina Koshland said. "All were completely unrelated."

Caires, who left on vacation after submitting his resignation, could not be reached for comment. While characterized by city officials as a popular and highly skilled public manager, Caires had recently taken heat from city employees who blamed him for the city's financial woes.

After Caires recommended that three employees be laid off last month, he was blasted by Steve O'Keefe, representing the Service Employees International Union. O'Keefe told the city council that a majority of city employees had no confidence in Caires' ability to lead the city out of its financial crisis.

Scotts Valley's revenues for the fiscal year ending in June are expected to fall \$276,140 short of the \$5.4 million anticipated earlier.

Walpole's first official assignment is to report to the council next week with plans to recruit a new city manager. While he is acting as city manager, police Capt. Tom Bush will serve as acting police chief.

One of Caires' last official acts was to recommend

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Scotts Valley planning search to fill city manager vacancy

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that Public Works Director Bob Rockett resign, Mayor Joe Miller confirmed. Rockett quit, saying he could not afford to accept the 10 percent cut in hours and wages that the city has proposed for its employees. He could not be reached for additional comment.

Miller also confirmed the city was conducting an "internal investigation" but declined further comment.

Walpole said he could not comment on personnel matters, but emphasized that the city is not conducting a major investigation. "An administrative review has been completed," he said. "I see no need for any criminal or administrative action to be taken at this point."

Rockett's duties will be shared,

with Ken Anderson taking over the city's maintenance and engineering departments, and Bob Geyer heading the sanitation and wastewater divisions. Miller said there are no immediate plans to hire a new public works director.

Miller, who has been on the city council since 1984, was selected by his colleagues to serve as mayor last month after Michael Caffrey resigned to devote more time to his family and a new business venture. His departure left an empty seat on the council, to be filled by voters on June 4.

The exodus began last July when Councilman Gerald Pittenger resigned and moved to his vacation home in Yuma, Ariz.

Scotts Valley's finance director Joyce Bray, will retire in July. She has worked for the city since 1984.