



Former Department of Building Inspection Tom Hui resigned after he was accused of misconduct. (Kevin N. Hume/S.F. Examiner)

# Commission taps chief building inspector to replace Tom Hui as DBI's interim director

Former department head stepped down after accusations of misconduct in corruption probe

JOSHUA SABATINI / MICHAEL BARBA / Mar. 18, 2020 1:13 p.m. / NEWS / THE CITY

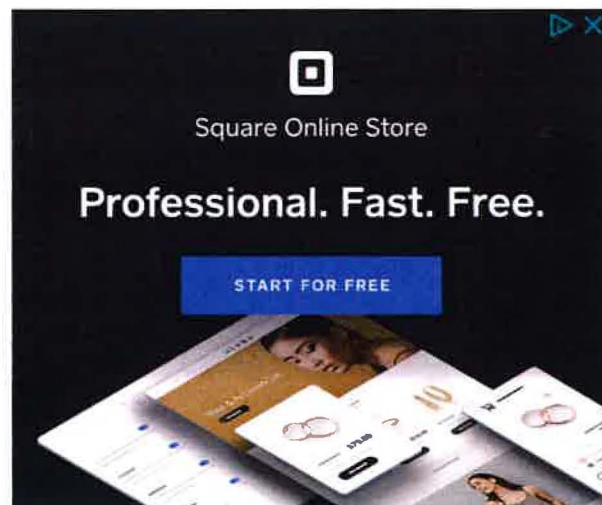
A new interim director was named Wednesday to lead the Department of Building Inspection after former department head Tom Hui resigned amid allegations that he committed legal and ethical violations.

The Building Inspection Commission voted to appoint Chief Building Inspector Patrick O’Riordan as interim director. O’Riordan has worked at the department as a chief building inspector for seven years.

Hui stepped down after the City Attorney’s Office accused him of a range of misconduct last week including that he accepted gifts from the developer behind a large project in Hayes Valley and gave him preferential treatment.

The City launched the investigation into Hui after the FBI arrested the former head of Public Works, Mohammed Nuru, in part for allegedly accepting gifts from the same developer of the 555 Fulton St. development, Zhang Li.

Mayor London Breed had called on the commission to remove Hui at its Wednesday meeting, but he resigned from the position before it could act.



“There is no place in public service for self-dealing,” Breed said in a March 10 letter to the commission recommending his removal. “Mr. Hui abused his position and authority, and betrayed the public trust.”

After meeting in closed session, the Building Inspection Commission emerged to announce O’Riordan as the appointee.



Patrick O’Riordan was appointed interim director of the Department of Building Inspection on Wednesday March 18, 2020. (Courtesy photo)

Commission President Angus McCarthy thanked O’Riordan for stepping up during a “difficult period” for the department.

“We had a really good discussion here and a lot of commissioners’ thoughts for the future were brought up, what’s going to be needed, particularly for this department,” McCarthy said at the meeting.

The commission plans to conduct a six-month national search to find a permanent replacement for Hui.

“Thank you for appointing me as interim director,” O’Riordan said. “I am deeply grateful for your expressed confidence in my leadership of DBI during what can only be called extraordinary times.”

O’Riordan assured the commission that, “We have terrific staff who work relentlessly every day to ensure that building and life safety codes are observed in both the letter and spirit of the laws behind them.”

“We will continue to do everything we can as a department to meet the mayor and Board of Supervisors ongoing leadership efforts to build more housing that is safely constructed for all, especially for our city’s most vulnerable populations,” O’Riordan said.

Nuru’s case is currently working its way through the federal court.

On Tuesday, his attorneys agreed with federal prosecutors to delay an upcoming hearing due to the coronavirus crisis. If a judge approves the agreement, the case will return to court April 16.