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NEWS

Ojai interim City Manager Mark Scott resigns, citing discord

Wes Woods II Ventura County Star

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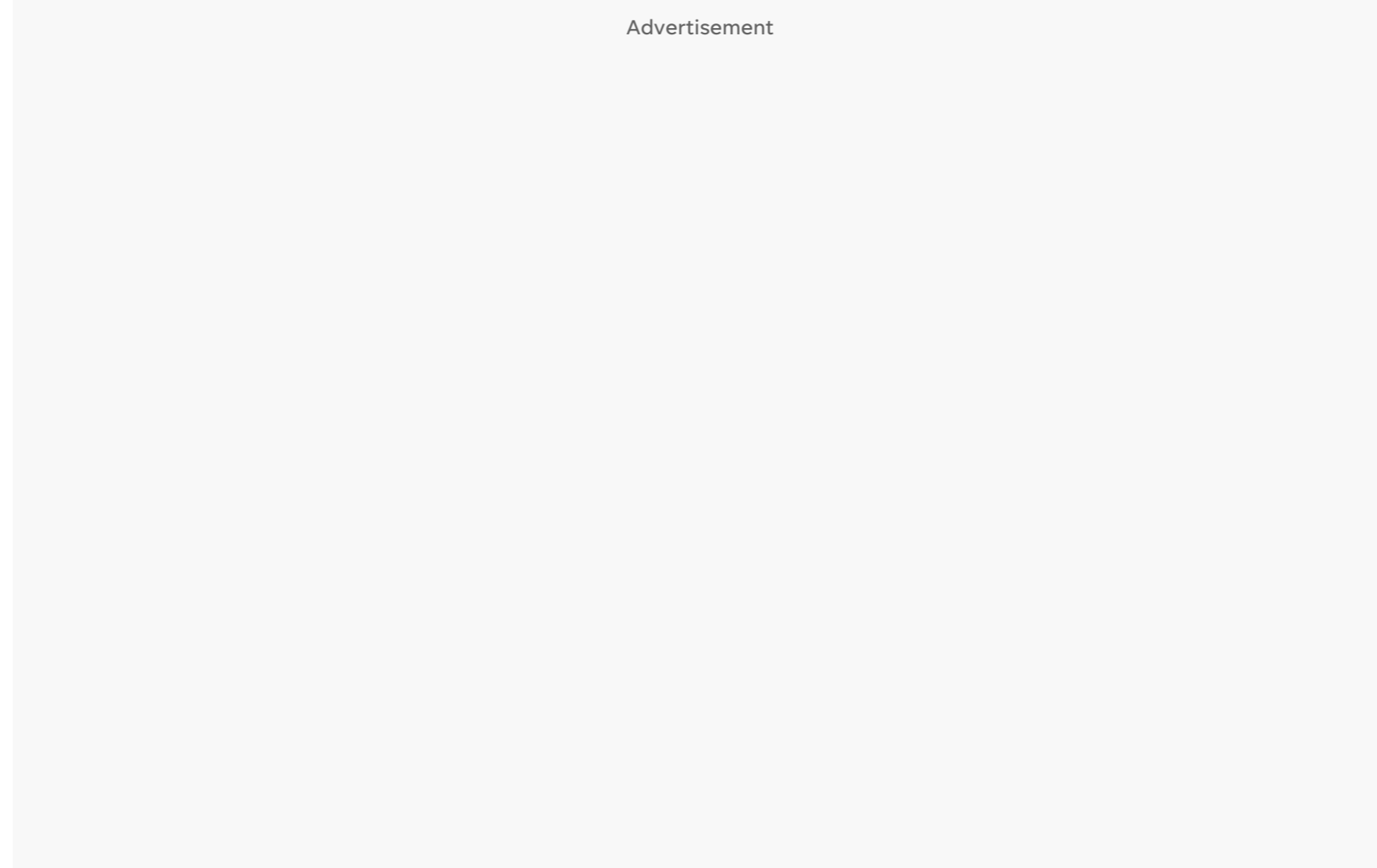
Mark Scott, Ojai's interim city manager who had been in the position for about four months, has abruptly resigned, citing discord in the city.



Ojai Interim City Manager Mark Scott resigned on Monday. Courtesy of the City of Ojai

Scott announced his immediate departure in an email to the city sent early Tuesday morning.

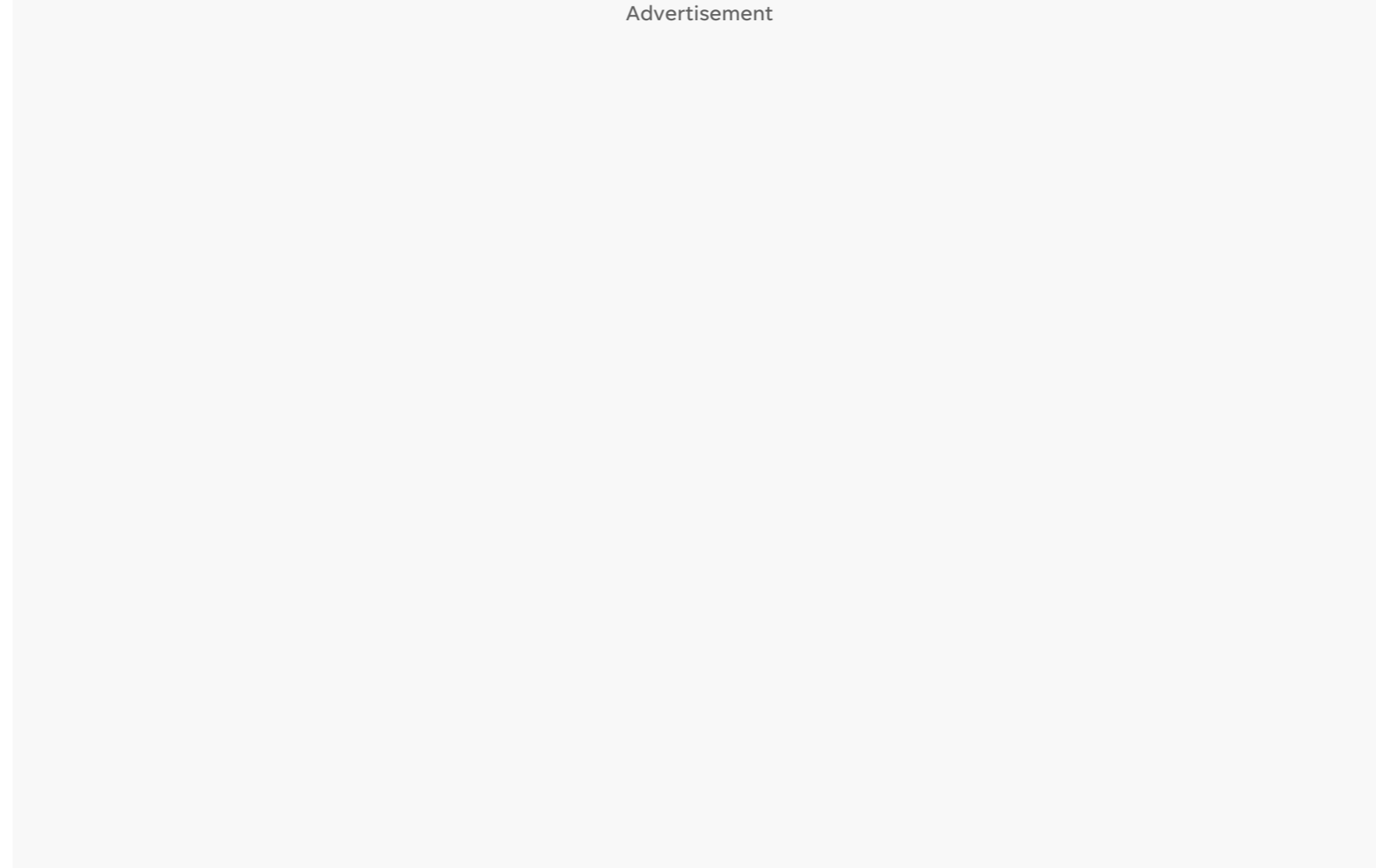
"First, I am going home tomorrow and do not plan to come back," Scott wrote in an email that arrived around 12:19 a.m., adding he would tie up some loose ends in a separate email. "Beyond that, words fail me right now. I know I will always regret my abrupt departure, but I just cannot tolerate the discord. I told you from the beginning what I stand for. I am a mismatch here."



Mayor Betsy Stix announced the news at Tuesday night's City Council meeting.

"We thank him for his service and all his hard work on behalf of our community," Stix said. "We are grateful for his time here and wish him all the best in his new adventure."

Scott was hired in July to replace James Vega, who left the city manager position for the same role in Port Hueneama.

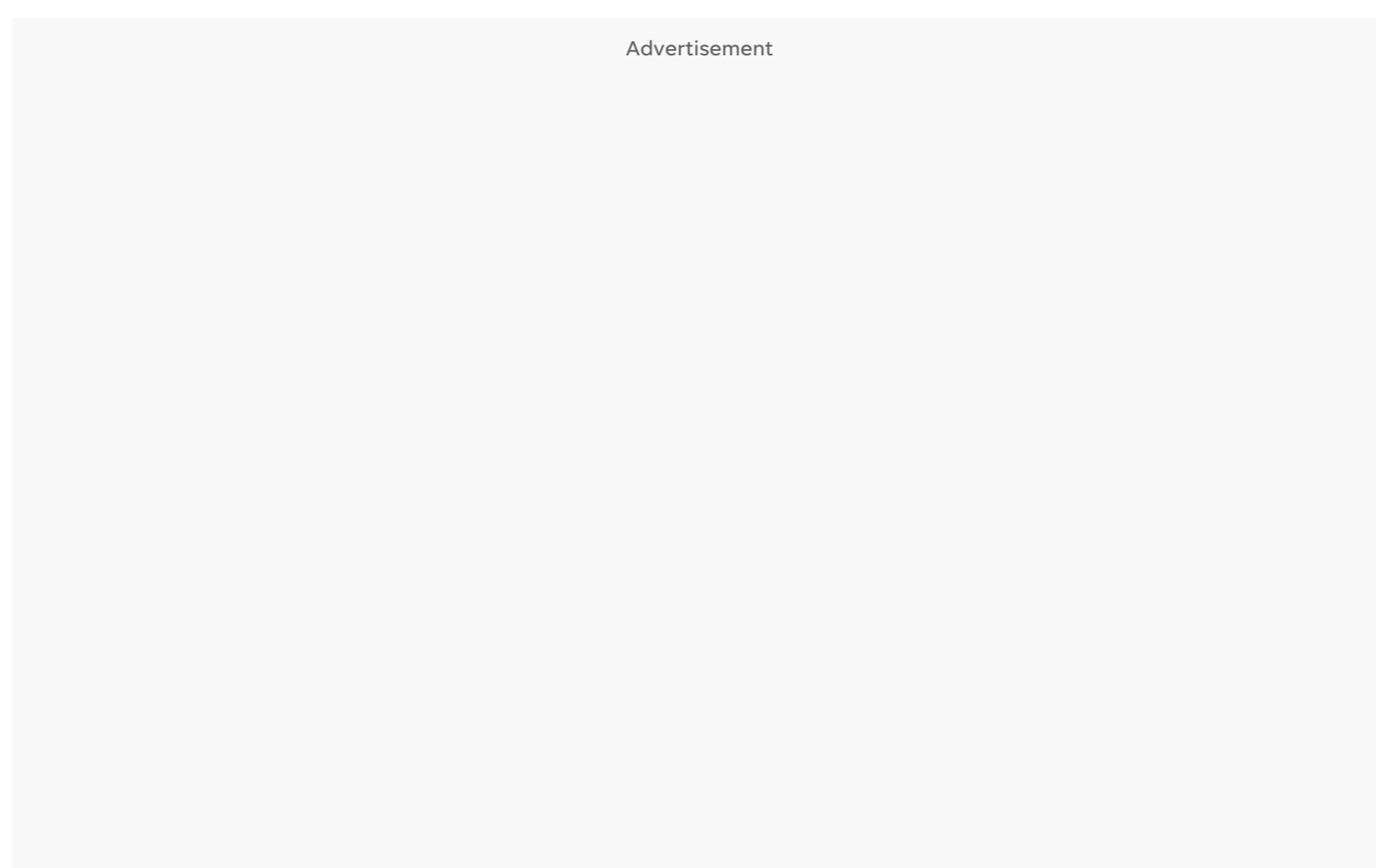


In his email, Scott wrote that if the public asks about his departure, he would just tell them "the plain truth."

"I am glad I had this time in Ojai," he wrote. "I feel like I had exhausted my ability to help. My rapid departure is my bad, not the council's. I wish you all wisdom and graciousness."

Scott had spent more than 30 years as city manager and interim city manager for nine other cities.

The resignation comes as heated debates during City Council meetings have become the norm, including on Tuesday night, when bickering and accusations continued between council members and the public. The disagreements are centered around lawsuits directed at both the City Council and Councilmember Leslie Rule, and a recall campaign against Councilmember Andrew Whitman.



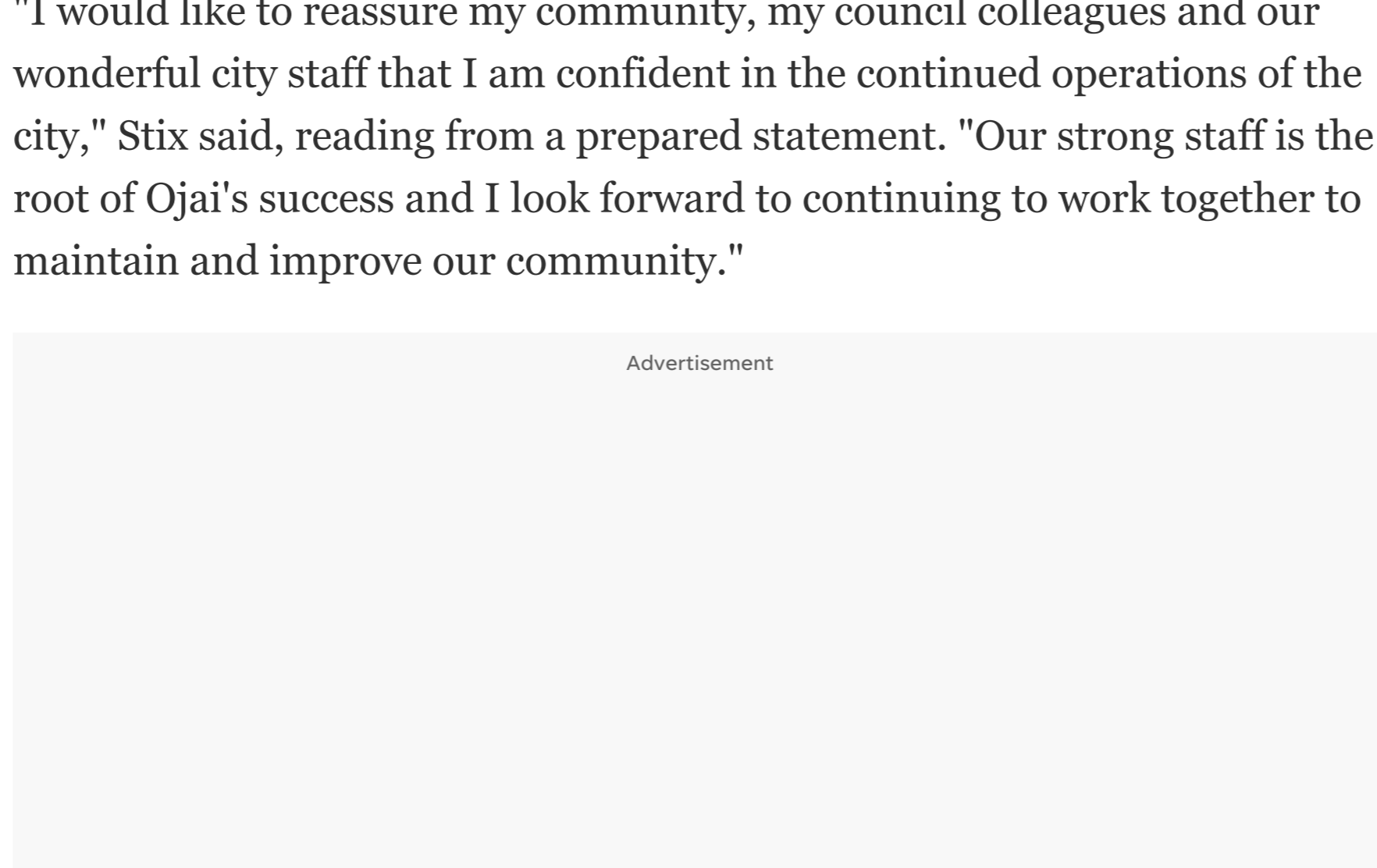
Carl Alameda, assistant city manager, is expected to be appointed acting city manager once the council votes at the Nov. 28 meeting, Stix said.

Alameda, a former assistant city manager for La Cañada Flintridge, was announced as the new assistant city manager at the same July meeting that Scott was named interim city manager.

Scott, an at-will employee whose contract was scheduled to end by Jan. 15 unless extended, was paid \$108 an hour, or the equivalent of an annual salary of \$220,000.

The city has been actively recruiting a permanent city manager. At the Nov. 28 meeting, the council will consider next steps to continue recruitment and discuss the next interim city manager, Stix said.

"I would like to reassure my community, my council colleagues and our wonderful city staff that I am confident in the continued operations of the city," Stix said, reading from a prepared statement. "Our strong staff is the root of Ojai's success and I look forward to continuing to work together to maintain and improve our community."



Stix did not immediately return an email on Wednesday on whether the council has a role in toning down the discord at meetings.

In an email to the Star on Tuesday night, Scott said he enjoyed his time in Ojai despite a weekly commute from Fresno.

"I felt that I had achieved all I could in Ojai, so I chose to step down," he wrote. "My only parting comments are thank-yous."

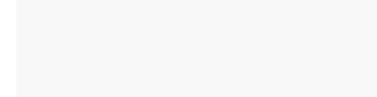
Alameda said Tuesday's meeting he is looking forward to the challenge of becoming acting city manager for the next few weeks at a minimum. He said he enjoyed working with Scott.

"It's been 15 years since I got to work with Mark when he was in Burbank," Alameda said. "A legend in the profession, so I enjoyed the time I got to have with him here."

This story may be updated.



Wes Woods II covers West County for the Ventura County Star. Reach him at wesley.woods@vcstar.com, 805-437-0262 or @JournoWes.



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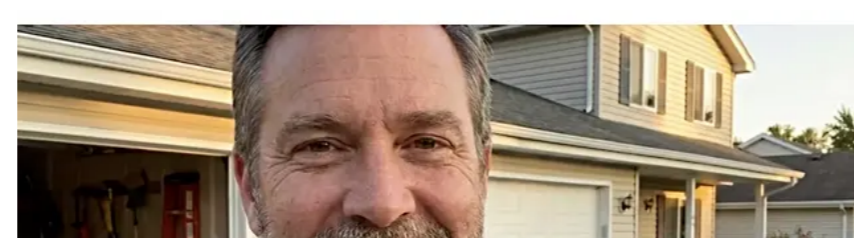
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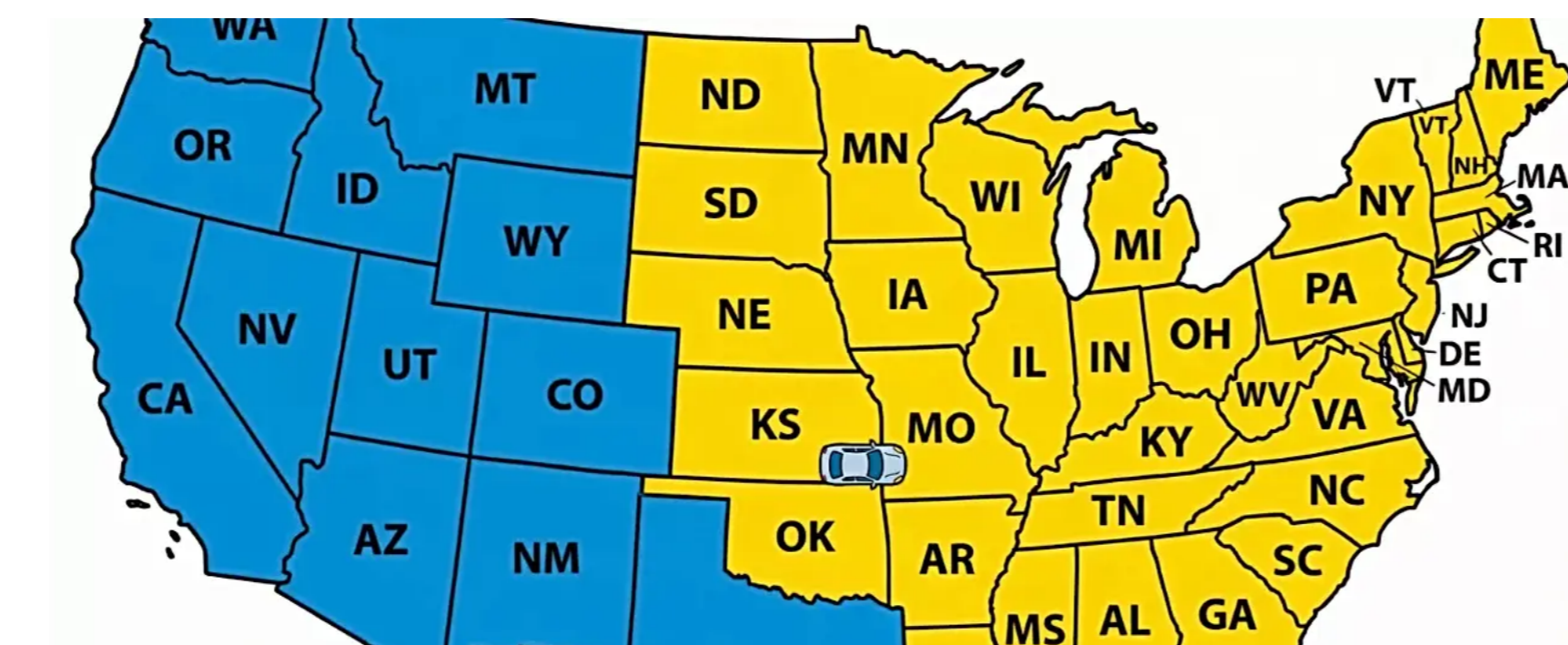
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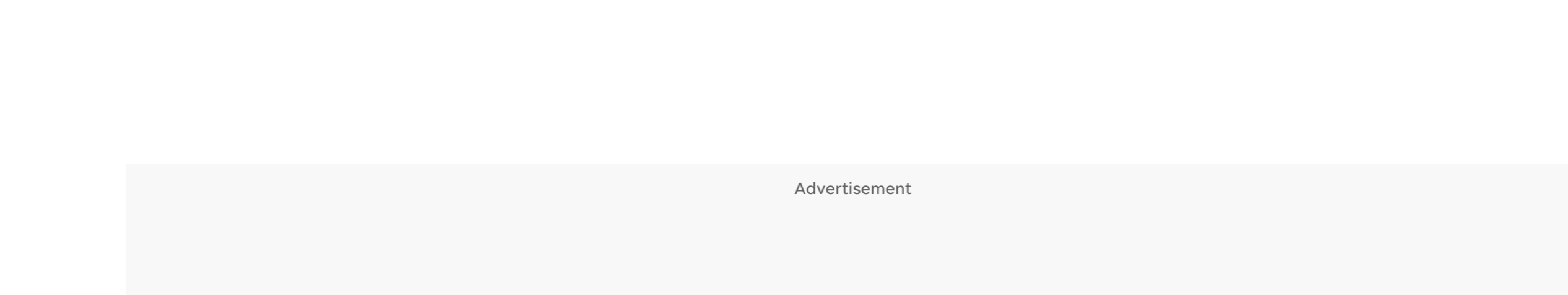


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