

Budget, personnel issues dominate Happy Homestead Cemetery agenda



Linda
Mendizabal,
John
McChesney, Del
Laine

By Kathryn Reed

The Happy Homestead Cemetery board approved a budget last week without having final numbers tabulated. As of Saturday not all board members knew what the exact figures are for revenues and expenses for the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1.

The board agreed to slash the estimated interest to be accrued from \$50,000 to \$20,000. Then the three members (John McChesney, Del Laine and Linda Mendizabal) started cutting expenses.

The end result is a difference of about \$7,000 that the board expects to put into reserves.

When board clerk and bookkeeper Coco Kelly left the Sept. 16 meeting to borrow a calculator she came back with a reserve of \$90,000, but said the calculator was too small to get accurate numbers and that she did the calculations three times, with

three different results.

The total budget for the South Lake Tahoe cemetery is close to a half million dollars.

Confusion reigned between the board members toward the end of meeting about how to pay Kelly for expenses she incurred while the county withheld payment for services rendered.

Kelly owns Substitute Personnel & Business Services and works at the discretion of the board to do clerk and bookkeeping duties. The job of clerk-bookkeeper has been in her family for about 30 years. Things started to get sticky in the last year when the county auditor-controller said Kelly could not work for the board while her husband, David, was a board member.

David Kelly chose to resign even though he had been on the board since 2003 without any alarms going off in Placerville.

Joe Harn, El Dorado County auditor, said in a letter dated Sept. 2 he was not going to pay a \$2,411.50 bill submitted by Coco Kelly until county counsel reviewed it.

Cemetery legal counsel Dennis Crabb said after the meeting that Kelly has since withdrawn her request to be paid for the work. Still, he said she would be getting paid for the expenses incurred because she had to borrow money to keep her finances in order.

At last week's meeting there were questions whether Kelly had been paid the \$3,000 for expenses related to the matter. McChesney said he didn't know how to get a check out of the endowment fund for this. Laine was adamant that Kelly gets reimbursed.

Because of a 3-0 vote by the board to combine what Kelly does with that of the cemetery's receptionist, it is possible Kelly will be out of a job unless she wants to give up her business and become staff at the cemetery.

The board also agreed to expand to become a five-member board. That could be in place by the end of the year.

The Board of Supervisors, which oversees special districts like this, will make the ultimate decision at a public hearing. Appointments would be made that day after the hearing. So far John Poell has applied to be on the board. He was at last week's meeting.