

Fallen Leaf Lake marina operation negotiations fall apart



Packed meetings, like the one earlier this month, are the norm these days at Fallen Leaf Lake. Photo/Susan Wood

By Susan Wood

At this point, Fallen Leaf Landing has no place to land given the current quagmire its manager and the community board overseeing the concessionaire operation are in.

No agreement was reached on a contract between the Fallen Leaf Lake Community Services District and John Rich, who has run the South Lake Tahoe area marina and general store for 14 years. The two sides gave each other until Sept. 19 to clear up differences that range from accounting practices to rent the CSD takes in to boat-washing activities to the occupation

of a second room above the store.

Negotiations fell apart when Mike Kraft, the board's vice president and one of two subcommittee members scheduled to meet with Rich, said he was approached and threatened in the last few weeks.

"Based on this threat and comments I received (at the picnic), I removed myself from the negotiations," Kraft said Tuesday. No one took his place.

"We didn't even get to the terms," Rich said Tuesday of the quasi contract.

Kraft has his share of critics because he wants to find the funding to have the district board run the dual marina-store operation with the help of an employed manager. Some in the usually tight-knit community who support the fourth-generation Rich accuse Kraft of operating behind closed doors.

Tempers have flared since the debate began in April, packing the Fallen Leaf Lake firehouse where the CSD board hosts its meetings. Some have suggested a recall may be in order if the popular Rich family is kicked out.

Rich added he still wants to run the store and marina because of the "phenomenal community support," but believes he's close to being ousted as a result of personal differences with the board.

Board President Dana Clark sent an email Tuesday declaring no changes to the last version of the Aug. 15 contract, which requires Rich to pay \$103,000 in rent.

"Without having an agreement in principle at this time, we will proceed with the steps necessary to execute the decision to have the CSD operate the store and marina for the 2010 season," the letter reads.

Clark admitted Tuesday it's unfortunate discussions didn't

resume between the board and Rich, especially since he “still has reservations” about the district taking over the operation. Nonetheless, the board is seeking a general manager and no other option has been placed on the table.

Rich cannot be dismissed without board approval. That could happen at the next meeting.

The district board will host a meeting in the coming weeks. Clark indicated the meeting should be scheduled between Oct. 10 and Nov. 7.

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