

Rise ordered to apologize to STPUD employee

By Kathryn Reed

After a 90-minute closed session and another hour of discussing the issue in open session, Dale Rise's colleagues on the South Tahoe Public Utility District board told him to apologize to the employee who brought a complaint against him.

Rise, who is chair of the board, was out of the room during the open deliberations per counsel's advice.



Dale Rise

He was given a chance to speak before the board members talked among themselves on Thursday afternoon.

"I did nothing wrong," Rise told the board. He also went into great detail about issues leading up to the alleged incident.

Jeri Callian, whom works in customer service and is the employee who filed the claim, said, "I can't express in words my shock and disappointment."

Callian claims Rise created a hostile work environment when he came to the district in his capacity as a contractor. The investigator's report says otherwise. What was determined is Rise violated three board policies.

It was as though the two were not party to the same incident

in listening to their words.

After the public spoke – which was Kenny Curtzwiler and John Runnels on behalf of Rise – counsel told the board to focus on the facts, the report and not the extraneous words that had been spoken.

It was left to board members Eric Schafer, Chris Cefalu and Jim Jones to decide what to do. Marylou Mosbacher, who is vice chairwoman of the board and who should have been running the meeting on this matter, decided she could only stay two hours.

As she left at 4pm she said, “Maybe you could give me a little more notice.” Apparently no one told her elected officials are supposed to stay until the end of the meeting and not put personal matters first on meeting days.

Schafer then took the gavel.

The three members agreed to accept the report given to them in regards to the findings from the investigation. But it was 2-1 vote in regards to what punishment should be meted. Jones was the dissenter.

“This is very serious. He has violated what code of ethics we do have. I think more needs to be done than an apology,” Jones said before the vote.

Cefalu and Schafer were of like minds in that not much could be done based on the infractions, which in large part have to do with a board member talking policy with an employee.

In the end, Rise must apologize to Callian in writing or verbally.

But it was also agree board members should be conducting themselves at a higher level as an elected official. Staff was directed to review the policy manual regarding board member conduct to see if it should be beefed up.