

El Dorado County, union close to agreement

By Kathryn Reed

What was going to be a protest during today's El Dorado County Board of Supervisors is now expected to be more of an employee rally.

This is because labor negotiations suddenly took a turn for the better on Monday.

"We are cautiously optimistic we are going to be able to reach a settlement that is fair and equitable to everyone," Richard Boyd, senior business agent for Local 1, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The nearly 800-strong Local 1 has been negotiating with the county since February to come up with a contract. The bargaining unit has been working without a contract since June 30 when the previous three-year contract expired. An unfair labor practice charge was filed with the Public Employees Relations Board.

Boyd said the county has been negotiating in bad faith up until Aug. 26 and that it had violated various bargaining rules, which is why the charge was filed with PERB.

"Regarding the unfair labor practice grievance filed by Local 1, the county is aware of the claim. The claim is baseless and we find it surprising given the progress that the parties are making at the bargaining table," Terri Daly, the county's chief administrative officer, told *Lake Tahoe News* on Aug. 26.

Boyd believes filing the charge spurred the county to come to the table Monday with a more reasonable offer. That offer has not been made public. The union and county are slated to sit down again Sept. 9.

The union represents almost all county employees except for sworn officers and management.

In the contract that expired nearly two months ago no raises were given and the big item was that employees had to pay 3 percent into their retirement via the Public Employee Retirement System.

Now Local 1 is asking for a four-year contract with wage increases each year starting with 5 percent this fiscal year and 3 percent each of the subsequent years.

It's not that county isn't giving raises, but they are for higher ups. Kelly Webb, interim information technology director, went from step 3 on the pay scale to step 4 on July 23, and then to step 5 on Aug. 6. The electeds approved these raises on 5-0 votes.

On July 31 the rate of pay for the human resources director was \$124,821. CAO Daly asked for it to be bumped to \$157,810 and the supervisors said OK on Aug. 1. Then Daly hired a friend of hers for that position.

On today's agenda is an item talking about hiring a communications specialist at \$100,000, even though it's not in the budget.

This chart details who the top salary earners are in El Dorado County.

A class and compensation study is also something the union wants.

"The county has agreed they are not competitive and because they are not competitive they have monumental recruitment and retention problems," Boyd said.

What the union is upset about is what it calls cherry picking individuals for raises – like the IT and HR directors.

“For us, it gets down to a justice and fairness argument,”
Boyd said.