

STPUD board not unanimous in contract vote

By Kathryn Reed

On a 3-2 vote Thursday afternoon, the South Tahoe Public Utility District board approved a three-year contract for employees that calls for raises of at least 6 percent and up to 9 percent in that time period.

Voting no were Chris Cefalu and Randy Vogelgesang.

"I can do the 2 percent cost of living. I cannot cap it at 9 percent," Cefalu said at the Sept. 4 meeting. "My decision has been known all along." He thought 9 percent was too high.

Vogelgesang, though, changed his mind at the meeting. He suddenly was having issues with the three-year agreement. He said he wanted to be responsive to ratepayers who have concerns about the contract.

"Right now talking about it is not the time because we made the union an offer," General Manager Richard Solbrig responded. "If you pull it off the table, there are consequences."

Had the offer been changed or not approved, the district would have faced state sanctions regarding unfair labor practices.

The board adopted the agreement at an Aug. 15 special meeting. Cefalu was not at that meeting and Vogelgesang said he didn't remember that decision.

Two members of the public spoke at Thursday's meeting. Pamela Bondor-Wenziger, who attended meetings in the spring when rate increases were discussed, questioned why the public doesn't have a say in salary increases.

Board President Eric Schafer assured her she was being heard, but it will be for future boards to take any action on what she had to say.

Kenny Curtzwiler said he believes the incoming board, of which there will be at least one new member (Schafer is stepping down) and the potential for two, should be deciding on the contract.

Schafer said the five seated were elected to do a job, were capable of doing it and those decisions should not be kicked down the road.

This is the second salary increase for STPUD employees in the last two years.

The board in November 2012 unanimously approved a four-year contract for the union and two-year for management that was retroactive to July 1, 2012. Union members received between a zero and 13.31 percent pay hike, while the management group increase was between zero and 14.1 percent. About two-thirds of the 92 union employees received a raise.

There are now 110 employees in the union and 17 managers not represented by the union.

The 2012 contracts allowed for salaries to be discussed at the two-year mark, which is now. Discussions about management wage increases are ongoing.

More details of the current contract are in this *Lake Tahoe News* story from Aug. 29.