

EDC ed board takes no action regarding supe

By Kathryn Reed and Joann Eisenbrandt

Jeremy Meyers, superintendent of the El Dorado County Office of Education, was not at Tuesday's special board meeting where he was the only agenda item.

He did write a letter to the board and had spoken to each member before the meeting.

"As you know, as elected county superintendent, I am not employed by the board, nor does the board evaluate my performance. As such, I believe there is not an appropriate role for me to play at this board's meeting," he wrote.



Jeremy Meyers

The letter was read into the record Sept. 15 by board President John Lane.

David Gerard, who is the attorney representing the board and the superintendent, cited a state Attorney General's opinion stating it would not be a conflict of interest for him to represent both entities.

Tuesday's special meeting was called to discuss what, if any, recourse the board might have in handling Meyers' DUI from earlier this summer.

A California Highway Patrol officer found Meyers asleep in a construction zone on Highway 49 at 2:45pm June 9, less than three hours after he left a board meeting. The CHP recorded Meyers' blood alcohol level at nearly twice the legal limit. He pleaded no contest to driving under the influence with a blood alcohol level of just more than 0.08.

A judge sentenced Meyers to five days in county jail that was then commuted to five days of home arrest.

In the letter to the board, Meyers wrote, "The home arrest portion of my sentence was done on personal time, not on work time. I will continue to separate my personal matter from my responsibilities as the county superintendent."

Unlike an employee who has differentiated work and personal time, an elected official does not have a set number of work hours. Even when they are away from the office they are still accountable to the people who put them in office – the public.

Meyers did not return or decline any of his nearly \$200,000 annual salary for the five days he was on house arrest.

He was driving his own vehicle at the time of his DUI. He drives his own vehicle for work and is reimbursed for mileage by the county. As is normal with a DUI arrest, Meyers' driver's license now restricts him to drive only for work, which given the nature of his position could be almost anywhere at anytime.

Board member Heidi Weiland, who had initiated the special meeting, asked if the county office of ed's drug-free work environment policy mentions alcohol. It does. It says one cannot possess, use, or be under the influence of a controlled substance at a school or other district workplace. Meyers was not accused of being under the influence at a work site.

About two dozen people attended Tuesday's 45-minute meeting in Placerville – a much larger number than is usual. Seven of

them spoke.

Nick Ridout, a part-time teacher for the county, asked the board not to play politics. He adamantly defended Meyers, calling him "an honorable man and a good human being."

A couple others echoed that sentiment.

Sherri Lum-Alarcon, though, said there should be consequences for what Meyers did, especially because he is in education.

Ken Cater, who used to work for the county Probation Department, said Meyers being released to his wife and not taken to jail was "not a sweetheart deal. It was pretty much standard stuff."

Instead of being taken directly to jail, Meyers was released to the custody of his wife. Law enforcement officials not with probation have told *Lake Tahoe News* it is "highly unusual" for that to have occurred.

Girard explained in detail the relationship between the board and superintendent, all of whom are elected.

"Neither is superior over the other. They each have their own responsibilities," Girard said. "They work as a partnership. The education codes lay out what each does. They work together in a give and take. Both are responsible to the electorate."

The board had little to say, with members Georgie Knight and Debbie Akin saying nothing.

"I clearly understand our role. I have complete faith that Jeremy will act in the county's best interest," board Vice Chairman Rich Fischer said.

Lane added, "I second what Rich said."

Meyers concluded his letter to the board by saying, "It is my belief the integrity of the elected office of the county

superintendent and the elected board of education is best served by recognizing the separate functions and duties of each.”

Lane asked if the board wanted to take any action; no one responded and the meeting was adjourned.