

Wednesday, November 25, 2009

Ruckus Raised At Co-op

By John Severance

SOCORRO -- The Socorro Police Department made yet another appearance at the Socorro Electric Cooperative meeting Monday, Nov. 16.

District V Trustee Charlie Wagner filed the complaint after the meeting was over.

According to the police report, Wagner said, while the co-op was in executive session, the suspect grabbed his leg and threatened to beat him up. The report said the suspect stated Wagner sat next to him in the meeting and that Wagner turned his chair around and while doing so he struck the suspect's legs. The complaint stated that the suspect then touched Wagner's legs and told him to turn back around and to stop kicking him.

An officer met with witnesses, who gave the same statement as the suspect reported. A full police report was not available at press time.

Just in the past three months, the police have been called three times during co-op meetings.

On Aug. 27, officers were called to the scene after five SEC member-owners became upset that they were not given the opportunity to listen to a presentation regarding the co-op's 2008-2009 audit.

On Oct. 28, member-owner Charlene West of Lemitar allegedly placed grapes in front of trustee Juan Gonzales and Gonzales allegedly responded by throwing the grapes back at West.

Police were then called and trustees claimed West had violated a restraining order against her. West's court date is set for Dec. 3.

The co-op board, meanwhile, passed a motion that would bar West from attending board meetings. "Mrs. West violated the restraining order and I am making a motion not to allow her at future meetings," trustee Milton Ulibarri said. The motion was seconded by Manny Marquez, but trustee Herman Romero questioned the legality of the motion and was assured by attorney Joanne Aguilar that the Board could bar her from attendance. "I question the rights of membership," trustee Charlie Wagner said.

Vice President Harold Baca, who presided over the meeting, said: "There are rights for the board too."

When contacted Tuesday, West said: "They have violated my constitutional rights and I don't think they have the right to do that. It's a personal vendetta. It's ridiculous."

The Christmas party was brought up and the board members voted to continue to hold an open bar. There was talk of drink tickets but that was shot down. Wagner wanted to know how much the Christmas party would cost and no one knew how much it would be. Wagner also brought up drunk driving and liability issues. "We always make arrangements to drive people home," Marquez said.

After 30 minutes, the board moved to executive session at Aguilar's request.