

Sniping among

delegation continues

County manager doesn't attend meeting; Rep. Franklin not pleased

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Political unrest continued Monday when Sullivan County Manager Ed Gil de Rubio refused to attend a special delegation meeting to continue answering questions about the current status of the budget.

“Today we are being refused as a board, as a delegation, of being able to ask the ques-

tions,” said delegation chairman Rep. Peter Franklin, D-Newport.

The meeting was the third continuation of what delegation member Rep. Beverly Rodeschin, R-Newport, has termed a “witch hunt” on the part of Franklin.

Gil de Rubio said he contacted the commissioners on Friday via e-mail stating why he and county health care administrator Scott Wojtkiewicz would not be attending the meeting. He stated that they had nothing

further to add to the questions presented by Franklin and that the meeting was not legally posted.

Gil de Rubio wrote in his e-mail, “Scott and I will not be attending Monday’s delegation meeting. Besides the fact that the meeting was not legally posted, the purpose of Monday’s meeting was to get feedback from Jeff Graham. As we know Jeff is visiting his brother in Alabama and is unable to attend the meeting.”

Gil de Rubio also advised the commissioners that they should not attend the meeting due to the improper posting and that, “You should be shying away from any form of impropriety.”

Delegate Rep. Carla Skinder, D-Cornish, defended Wojtkiewicz and Gil de Rubio stating that on Monday mornings they usually have staff meetings they must attend.

“We need to talk to them ahead of time to make sure they can be here,” Skinder said.

Franklin did not accept Skinder’s explanation.

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"There is nothing so pressing that the county manager can't come to a delegation meeting," Franklin said. "Having neither of them here is an affront to the county delegation."

With Gil de Rubio absent, Franklin ordered Sullivan County Commission Chairwoman Ethyl Jarvis to bring Dodi Violette, an account clerk who does the book-keeping for the county, into the meeting to answer questions about the budget.

According to Jarvis, Gil de Rubio would not allow Violette to attend the meeting.

"I thought I was the boss," Jarvis told Franklin. "This is getting ridiculous. I can't believe it."

Rodeschin told Franklin why she thinks Gil de Rubio will not allow his staff to speak with Franklin.

"When you talk to the staff, you harass them and bring them to tears," Rodeschin said. "You harass them and that's why they are not allowed to speak with you. In all my years, I've never seen a staff treated so badly."

Franklin disagreed and told Rodeschin that her accusations were false.

Delegation member Ray Gagnon, D-Claremont, attempted to defuse the situation as tensions began to run high inside

the room.

"How can we work better as a team?" Gagnon asked. "It's not us guys, you guys."

Franklin then continued to talk about what he perceives as a potential major shortfall in the county budget.

"The present status of the county, in my view, is very precarious," Franklin said.

But county commissioner Ben Nelson disagreed.

"We are quite confident we can bring in the budget and have a balanced budget," Nelson told Franklin. "You are getting the information you need. If it doesn't say what you want, I'm sorry."

Delegation member Rep. Sue Gottling, D-Sunapee, said the delegation has been requesting a cash flow analysis from Gil de Rubio for months, but instead has only received a lengthy budget report of more than 20 pages.

"We have not received the relatively simple information we have asked for," Gottling said.

Franklin then requested the county budget report for May from the commissioners, but admitted that it is usually not available until the 10th of the month.

Nelson said it was not ready, but said he may be able to have it by the 7th. Gottling

then demanded the report be produced immediately, but Nelson said he could not have it because it was not ready.

Franklin said he thought Violette was being insubordinate and also made that comment about Gil de Rubio's actions toward the delegation.

"I think it's insubordinate," Franklin said.

Skinder asked Jarvis if Gil de Rubio were aware of the meeting.

"There was no communication," Jarvis responded.

Skinder requested that Jarvis and Nelson have full communication with Gil de Rubio and try to work out a time when they could meet.

The meeting was originally scheduled to begin at 9 a.m., but was delayed by half an hour because the commission did not have a quorum. Others in attendance were representatives Larry Converse, D-Claremont, John Cloutier, D-Claremont, Arthur Jillette, D-Goshen, and Ellen Nielsen, D-Unity.

No action was taken at the meeting other than to accept the minutes from two previous meetings. It was recessed again at 11:30 a.m. and will continue for the fourth time next Monday at the county commissioner's office in Newport.