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LOCAL/NATION

Mosquito district to weigh Grand Jury's harassment report

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Directors of the county's Mosquito and Vector Control District are meeting July 17 to review recommendations made after an investigation into sexual harassment claims was conducted by the San Joaquin County Grand Jury.

A Grand Jury report reflects an extensive investigation into sexual harassment claims made at the district. The report, released June 12, stated that more than one employee described "rude, vulgar and otherwise lewd remarks" being made by a co-worker in the break room.

According to the report, the employee's conduct was not isolated to a single incident. Rather, it was well known by staff that the employee was making the sexually suggestive comments, and that the individual did it often, the report stated.

The Grand Jury conducted interviews with all managers and supervisors, the report stated. The Grand Jury also interviewed employees and board of trustees members.

In addition to interviews, the Grand Jury reviewed district policy and procedures manuals and board minutes and agendas, among other items.

During testimony, the Grand Jury report stated that management and supervisors were informed of the

"offending behavior" on at least two occasions by multiple employees.

However, while management could quote relevant district policies and how the situation should have been handled, no documentation could be provided on what actions were taken regarding the sexual harassment complaints.

The Grand Jury recommended the district take steps to improve its sexual harassment policy and training. It specifically recommended the district's annual sexual harassment prevention training be a separate program.

According to the district's manager, John Stroh, sexual harassment prevention training has historically been offered as a stand-alone session as well as merged with other training topics.

While Stroh could not comment on the status of the employee who was accused of the harassment, he stated the employee was dealt with per district policy.

The district's board of trustees will meet on July 17 to discuss the Grand Jury's report and to form a response to the recommendations made, Stroh added.

The meeting will be held at the district's office at 7759 S. Airport Way in Stockton at 1 p.m.

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