

School board recall threatened

January 17, 2020



While Del Norte County Unified School District faculty contract negotiations continue, a community member is offering his solution to the stalemate.

Former Del Norte Teachers Association representative Mike Mealue has served notices of his intent to circulate a petition to recall each of the school board members as well as school Superintendent Jeff Harris.

Mealue told the board during the public comment portion of its Jan. 9 meeting that during his 30 years with the school district, including 10 as the teachers' union president, he directed an election campaign that defeated two school board incumbents, and helped gain voter approval of a \$25-million bond measure in 2008.

"In my opinion, the current impasse has nothing to do with money. It is about ego and power," Mealue said to the board members. "It is about ego and power.

"I apologize to those trustees who quietly supported employees. I just don't know who you are."

Mealue said he had yet to receive any support from the teachers' union for his recall efforts, but warned the board that a successful petition drive would set the district back \$60,000 in special election costs.

Harris responded that anyone has the right to initiate a notice of recall campaign, which involves basically gathering names on a petition and submitting it to the Del Norte County Elections Office.

"I would say I'm disappointed someone feels that's the only recourse left at this point, when the district and bargaining teams continue to talk," added Harris.

"I completely understand the frustration at this point, especially since the negotiations are confidential. I truly, sincerely hope we come to an agreement beneficial for students and teachers, regardless of the concept of recall."

A separate recall petition must be submitted for each individual board member involved.

According to Del Norte County Clerk Alissia Northup, 20% of the registered voters in Del Norte County would have to sign each petition to trigger all of the recalls. She said that equates to about 3,000 signatures from the approximately 15,000 registered voters.

Northup said the school board has seven days to respond to Mealue's notification. He must also publish his notification in the local press – which he had not done as of The Triplicate's Jan. 14 issue.

Northup said that once he has the board's response and has met the publication requirements, Mealue may submit the correct form to her office. He then has 120 days to gather the required signatures - which would be a first for her, said Northup.

"I've never had a recall petition go through here. The last recall I remember being successful was for California Gov. Gray Davis in 2003," she said.