Fallen Leaf Lake concessionaire quits after less than 1 month

By Susan Wood

With the new concessionaire opting out, it’s back to square one for the seemingly endless circle of political debate over who will run the general store and marina at Fallen Leaf Lake.

Rick Firkins, a caterer with a business based in Albuquerque and home in Christmas Valley, sent the Community Services District board a letter of resignation less than a month after the panel selected him to run the hub of the mountain village outside South Lake Tahoe.

The issue has divided the community, consumed hours in meetings during the last year, led to threats and ousted John and Ruth Rich after 14 years because of an impasse in contract negotiations.

When the board selected Firkins as the concessionaire, the Rich family said they plan to focus on other personal matters and Firkins was preparing for upgrades at the lakefront store and cafe. That vision was short lived when he learned the turmoil he was about to enter.

“I have concluded that the Fallen Leaf venture would cause irreparable damage to my business, my family and most probably, my sanity,” Firkins wrote, adding: “It has become clear to me that my ability to succeed in this endeavor has been irrevocably compromised by those who have essentially dragged my name through the mud with their vicious emails.”

The sentiment resembled former board President Dana Clark’s letter of resignation in January because he said he has chosen

to invest his time in “positive events.”

Firkins continued: “Good burgers, (barbecue) and ice cream will not fix the vicious divide in the Fallen Leaf community, and the air out there is too toxic for my taste.”

(Click letter to read the full text.)

CSD Board President Mike Kraft expressed disappointment in Firkins decision.

“Unfortunately, his letter has a familiar ring,” Kraft said an email to community members, referring to tumultuous environment created between the Rich family supporters and others who want to make a change.

Kraft went on to solidify the board’s commitment to finding a new concessionaire. The matter will be discussed in upcoming meetings. One is scheduled for later this month. Those interested in the job may submit a letter to pmiller@fallenleaflakecsd.org, the address of the clerk of the board.