

Executive Summary of Confidential Investigation Report

Client: Santa Clara Valley Water District

Complainant: Complainant

Subject: Respondent

Investigator: Karen Carrera, Esq., AWI-CH
RENNE PUBLIC LAW GROUP

Date: January 7, 2026



**350 Sansome Street | Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94104**

I. INTRODUCTION

On October 20, 2025, Santa Clara Valley Water District (“SCVWD” or “the District”) retained Renne Public Law Group (“RPLG”) to conduct an impartial investigation of Complainant’s allegations against Respondent. This executive summary provides an analysis of Complainant’s allegations that Respondent failed to accommodate Complainant’s religion when he did not accommodate her requests to reschedule the September 23, 2025, board meeting in observance of Rosh Hashanah, and that by denying her request, he created a hostile work environment. Complainant elevated the allegations to a formal complaint, prompting this investigation.

II. ALLEGATIONS

Failure to accommodate: Complainant reported that on September 21 and 22, 2025, she emailed Respondent about a conflict with the September 23, 2025, meeting, which fell on Rosh Hashanah. Complainant, who is Jewish, requested that Respondent reschedule the meeting or, alternatively, postpone all non-urgent matters to another date and not hold a closed session.

Respondent responded that it was too late to reschedule but advised that Complainant could join remotely. Complainant responded by saying that Respondent did not adequately consider her accommodation request. She alleged that he failed to reschedule the meeting or the non-essential agenda items to another date because he did not want her input regarding the District CEO’s discipline, which she stated was scheduled for discussion in closed session.

Creation of a hostile workplace: Complainant also alleged that Respondent’s excuse—that she should have asked a week earlier to reschedule the meeting—was actually a false pretext and a hostile act, given that she had repeatedly complained about the CEO’s fraud and corruption.

III. RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS

Respondent denied both that he failed to accommodate Complainant’s request and that this failure created a hostile workplace. He noted that while the board accommodates legal holidays by rescheduling meetings, it does not routinely adjust for other religious holidays unless a specific request is made in advance. Respondent stated that Complainant made no such request until the night of Sunday, September 21, less than 48 hours and only one business day before the September 23, 2025, meeting.

Respondent confirmed that he consulted with District Counsel and Senior Assistant District Counsel before responding to Complainant. The Senior Assistant District Counsel drafted the response email, which the Respondent sent to Complainant on September 22, 2025.

Respondent stated that he would likely have accommodated Complainant’s request if she had made it at the September 9, 2025, meeting. He explained that the agenda for the September 23, 2025, meeting had already been published in accordance with the District’s policy, which requires ten business days’ notice to the public. The agenda included several contracts and closed-session items that were deemed urgent

and time sensitive. He also noted that Complainant was offered the option to attend the meeting remotely via Zoom or to request an excused absence, in accordance with board policy.

Respondent described Complainant as a disruptive presence during board meetings, citing instances in which she interrupted other members, refused to yield the floor, and created a hostile environment for others. He further explained that the board had previously sanctioned Complainant following an independent investigation into complaints from District employees.

IV. WITNESS INFORMATION

In addition to the complainant and respondent, the investigators interviewed three witnesses.

- **Witness #1:** Described Complainant as a disruptive colleague who often dominated discussions and made unsubstantiated claims, but did not witness discriminatory behavior based on gender or religion.
- **Witness #2:** Shared very little about board interactions, stated he did not recall discussing Complainant's request to reschedule the meeting, and did not observe discriminatory treatment toward her. He did not respond to specific questions or provide direct answers.
- **Witness #3:** Confirmed Complainant is under sanction due to prior violations of board policy, stated that scheduling conflicts should be addressed at the beginning of the year, and did not believe Respondent acted with hostility or discrimination.

V. FINDINGS

A. Did Respondent fail to accommodate Complainant's religion when he did not accommodate her requests to reschedule the September 23, 2025, board meeting in observance of Rosh Hashanah, or move all non-urgent items to a later date?

Not sustained. A preponderance of the evidence does not support a finding that Respondent failed to accommodate Complainant's religion by refusing to reschedule the September 23, 2025, meeting.

1. Complainant's request to reschedule the meeting as an accommodation

In her September 21, 2025, email, Complainant requested that Respondent reschedule the September 23, 2025, board meeting. She gave two days' notice and believed her request was reasonable.

Witness #3 confirmed that meetings are sometimes rescheduled due to conflicts. He said that while the September 23, 2025, meeting would have had the minimum number of attendees without the Complainant, it is preferable to have more than four members voting.

However, Witness #3 also stated that the appropriate time to discuss scheduling conflicts, including religious holidays, is at the beginning of the year, when the annual calendar is approved, rather than two days before a meeting.

Respondent, Witness #1, and Witness #3 all confirmed the board's meeting schedule for the entire year was unanimously approved on January 14, 2025, during the first meeting of the calendar year. The meetings were scheduled for the remainder of the year, to take place on the first and fourth Tuesday of each month.

A review of the minutes and the recording of this meeting confirmed that Complainant was in attendance and did not voice any concerns about the 2025 meeting schedule.

According to Witness #1, while policy exists that excuses religious absences, no board policy requires rescheduling meetings as religious accommodations.

Moreover, a review of footage and minutes from the September 9, 2025, meeting preceding the September 23, 2025, meeting confirms that Complainant was in attendance and did not raise any scheduling concerns.

Respondent stated that while the board accommodates legal holidays such as Christmas and Veterans Day by rescheduling meetings, it does not routinely adjust for religious holidays unless a specific request is made in advance. Respondent stated that Complainant made no such request until two days before the September 23, 2025, meeting. He stated that, if she had asked a week earlier, he would have accommodated her request.

Given the time Complainant had to request a change to the schedule, it was unreasonable for her to contact Respondent two days in advance and expect the meeting to be rescheduled. She could have requested the schedule change on both January 14, 2025, and September 9, 2025, but did not do so. Moreover, the Respondent presented a business-related reason for proceeding with the meeting on schedule, including time-sensitive contracts and personnel matters requiring attention. The Respondent also gave the Complainant the option to attend the meeting remotely.

For these reasons, a preponderance of the evidence does not support a finding that Respondent failed to accommodate Complainant by refusing to cancel the September 23 meeting.

2. Moving non-essential agenda items to another meeting date

In her September 21, 2025, email, Complainant asked Respondent to move all non-essential agenda items and the closed session to a different date.

It was the Respondent's decision whether or not to move the items. Witness #2 confirmed that moving board agenda items is done at the chair's discretion.

Witness #3 stated that agenda items are sometimes rescheduled or canceled, often due to scheduling conflicts or the need for additional input from other agencies.

Review of the September 23 meeting recording and minutes showed that one item from the closed session was rescheduled, demonstrating that postponement could have been applied to other non-essential items.

In his response email to Complainant, Respondent stated: “We will continue with the scheduled meeting and make agenda modifications if the Board wishes to. *You can join remotely* or request to be excused.”

When asked why he did not move non-essential agenda items after realizing he could not move the meeting, the Respondent stated that he did not read the portion of the email requesting that accommodation. Investigators did not find this plausible. As the board chair responsible for meeting scheduling, the Respondent should have reviewed the entire email and clearly stated whether he would agree to reschedule non-essential agenda items to another date.

As stated by Witnesses #3, #1, and #2, and as reflected in the meeting minutes, agenda items are routinely rescheduled. For these reasons, it appears reasonable that Respondent could have accommodated Complainant’s request to move non-essential items to another meeting.

On the other hand, in his email, Respondent told Complainant that she could appear remotely. He believed this was a reasonable accommodation to her request. The sentence in his email stating “we will continue with the scheduled meeting and make agenda modifications if the Board wishes to, you can appear remotely” indicates that he intended for her to attend the meeting, remotely or otherwise, and request agenda modifications. Complainant could have participated in the meeting remotely and requested that non-urgent items be removed or rescheduled.

Thus, a preponderance of the evidence does not support a finding that Respondent failed to accommodate Complainant’s religion when she requested that he move non-essential items to another date.

B. Did Respondent create a hostile workplace for Complainant by failing to accommodate her religion?

Complainant alleged that Respondent’s failure to accommodate her request created a hostile workplace and that the hostilities stemmed from her serving as a whistleblower against corruption at SCVWD. She stated that she had been censured, sued, removed from committees, and had her pay reduced without legal grounds.

Respondent countered that Complainant was censured for the findings of an investigation against her and for disruptive behavior in official proceedings. He denied that his failure to accommodate her request to reschedule the September 23, 2025, meeting was a hostile gesture, despite Complainant’s repeated allegations of board corruption and collusion with the Water District’s CEO.

Witness #1 also explained that board members’ responses to Complainant were reactions to her conduct rather than evidence of bias or discrimination. Witness #1 confirmed that Complainant had been removed from all committees following the board’s censure. She said the censure resulted from complaints filed against Complainant, alleging bullying, sexism, racism, and the creation of a hostile work environment for staff members, several of which were upheld by an investigation. Witness #1 believed there was no connection between the Respondent’s failure to reschedule the September 23, 2025, meeting and the Complainant’s allegations against the board.

Witness #2 described Complainant's actions during board meetings as disruptive, noting that she often went off-topic and spent significant time discussing matters unrelated to the agenda.

Witness #3 confirmed that this was not a "whistleblower" issue, as personnel matters are legally required to be addressed in private during closed session. Witness #3 stated that he does not believe Respondent is actively supporting the CEO or retaliating against Complainant.

A review of documents provided by Complainant herself confirms that prior investigations upheld the accusations of abusive conduct against her, that she breached board confidentiality and protocol, and that she harshly criticized other board members.

A review of board meeting video recordings shows similar harshness and disruptive conduct by Complainant. Further, the records she provided show that Complainant was censured for taking a confidential human resources report without permission and for refusing to return it, despite a court order to do so.

Ultimately, the hostility Complainant experienced appears not to be a direct result of the failure to accommodate her request to reschedule the September 23, 2025, meeting, but rather a result of her disruptive behavior and breaches of board protocols over the course of her tenure. Further, the Respondent's refusal to reschedule the meeting was based on a legitimate business reason. That is, Complainant's request was made too close to the meeting, and the board needed to discuss several outstanding agenda items concerning Valley Water. Respondent told her in writing that she could join the meeting remotely. By letting her know she could join the meeting remotely, he was providing a reasonable accommodation, not acting in a hostile manner.

For these reasons, the preponderance of the evidence does not support a finding that the failure to accommodate created a hostile work environment.

Respectfully submitted,



Karen C. Carrera, Esq., AWI-CH