WCSD administration to "fulfill their obligation to properly investigate my Hostile Work Environment and Retaliation claim, avoiding unnecessary litigation and media attention."

That was in 2018. It wasn't until March of this year that the school district's attorney, Neil Rombardo, in concert with then-Superintendent Traci Davis, approved an investigation. What was investigated is disputed.

"WCSD did not meet their burden of proof that the alleged actions of Ms. Olsen constituted misconduct, as alleged. WCSD took disciplinary measures against Ms. Olsen [that] were retaliatory, and WCSD's dismissal of Ms. Olsen was arbitrary and capricious," Busby explained. "Unfortunately, the District chose to respond to Olsen's lawsuit with the public release of its 'confidential investigation,' to the RGJ, which was conducted months after the arbitrator's decision."

Olsen maintained that she reported in good faith what she viewed as serious issues at WCSD, including a teacher who gave marijuana back to a student. The district moved to fire her in part by saying that she made "false claims" about her supervisor, then Hug High School Principal Lauren Baxter Ford. The arbitrator disagreed with the district's position and ordered Olsen reinstated.

Hall's later investigation into Olsen's claims, Busby said, was far from objective.

"The District did not achieve the result it wanted in the arbitration conducted by a fair and impartial third party neutral between itself and Ms. Olsen, so it hired its own lawyer to conduct an investigation of itself to get the result it wanted," he said.

DAVIS' CASE

Former Superintendent Davis, who is named as a defendant in Olsen's case, has also filed a lawsuit against WCSD over her firing earlier this year. Davis, through her attorney, alleged that her firing was conducted in violation of state law and district policies.

Ironically, a claim by the district as part of her termination, is that Davis leaked confidential documents to those involved with Hunt's lawsuit—two former district administrators who were fired just before Davis.

"No evidence was provided that Superintendent Davis was the source of any confidential information allegedly possessed or passed on by [an employee]," Davis' attorney, William Peterson said. "Notwithstanding the lack of evidence, the [school board of trustees] came to its predetermined conclusion, voting to terminate [Davis] for cause..."

School District officials have denied any wrongdoing, and the district has vowed to defend itself against what it is calling baseless allegations. It did not respond to a number of questions for this story.

This story was published in collaboration with the news website ThisIsReno.com.

Top of her class



Emily Hernandez Medina was valedictorian of the 2019 North Valleys High School class but was not allowed to give her commencement speech. She gave it on Oct. 19 at the 74th Annual Freedom Fund awards banquet hosted by the Reno-Sparks NAACP. This is how it ended: "I was told I couldn't be valedictorian. I was criticized for being an art dork. I was disparaged constantly for being a first-generation Latina. Being valedictorian means nothing, but what I've done as an individual shines through. I'm more than a 5.3 GPA. I'm more than nine AP classes. I'm more than the number only recognizes me for—and so are you, class of 2019."

PHOTO/JEBI DAVIS

