

DFLer Phyllis Kahn files ethics complaint against Hastings

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Rep. Phyllis Kahn, D-Minneapolis, left, and Rep. Denny McNamara, R-Hastings

DFL Rep. Phyllis Kahn is accusing Republican Rep. Denny McNamara of yelling at her and a lobbyist so vociferously that she felt "threatened," she said in an ethics complaint filed Monday.

In a statement, McNamara said he reacted in a way he now regrets and would like to apologize to Kahn. But he said there is more to the story.

According to the complaint Kahn filed, she and Minneapolis Park Board lobbyist Brian Rice went to McNamara's office on May 16 to discuss a parks matter. Kahn, DFL-Minneapolis, said the discussion turned to McNamara's accusation that the park board shifted its business from McNamara's nursery.

"He then became incredibly agitated and accused Rep. Kahn and Mr. Rice of being deceitful and conniving. He became red in the face, rose to his feet and began screaming for them to get out of his office," according to Kahn's ethics complaint.

The complaint claims McNamara, R-Hastings, slammed the door as she and Rice, who has acted as an attorney for Kahn on campaign matters, left the office.

"In 43 years of serving in the Legislature, Rep. Kahn claims to have never felt so threatened and domineered by a fellow legislator," the ethics complaint said.

The complaint claims the behavior was in violation of the rules of the House, which require members to "treat everyone with respect, fairness and courtesy."

McNamara said that while his reaction was regrettable, he had reason to feel upset.

He said he was told secondhand that a park board lobbyist said "there might be retaliation to my son's landscaping and nursery business" if he did not back off a move to repeal an earmark for the North Minneapolis Regional Park.

At the time of the meeting with Kahn, he said in a statement, he thought that lobbyist was Rice.

"The point I was attempting to make was that votes cast by members of the Legislature, whether Republican or Democrat, should never be held against their family members. As I made very clear, my integrity is not for sale," he said.

He later was told that Rice was not the person who allegedly connected the park department contracts with legislative votes.

The matter now goes to the bipartisan House Ethics Committee to sort out.

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