

Deborah Dugan claims Grammys board tried to rehire her predecessor, Neil Portnow

 pagesix.com/2020/01/21/deborah-dugan-claims-grammys-board-tried-to-rehire-her-predecessor-neil-portnow

By Mara Siegler

Ousted Grammys head Deborah Dugan has claimed in a bombshell legal filing that its board asked to rehire her predecessor, Neil Portnow, even though, she claims, some members of the board were aware of allegations that he raped a musician.

In papers filed Tuesday, Dugan — who was put on leave last week after an employee alleged Dugan had bullied her — said that the chair of the board of the Recording Academy, which runs the Grammys, told her to hire former CEO Portnow as a consultant for \$750,000. Dugan claims she learned of the rape allegations later.

It's the latest in several rounds of public mudslinging between Dugan and the Academy: Each claims the other cooked up false allegations to save their own skin. The complaint also alleges that Dugan was sexually harassed by the Academy's general counsel, Joel Katz, and that the misconduct accusations against Dugan are "false" and designed to "malign her reputation."

The Academy's interim CEO claimed in a memo that Dugan offered to drop her complaints in return for "millions of dollars," and the filing says that's more of the board trying "to destroy Ms. Dugan for the sole reason that she posed a threat to the 'boys' club.'"

Katz's attorney Howard Weitzman told Page Six in a statement: "Ms. Dugan's allegations of harassment and her description of a dinner at the steakhouse in the Ritz Carlton, Laguna Niguel are false and Mr. Katz categorically and emphatically denies her version of that evening.

This dinner meeting was 2½ months before Ms. Dugan started her job. Mr. Katz believed they had a productive and professional meeting in a restaurant where a number of members of the Board of Trustees of the Academy, and others, were dining.

Ms. Dugan's claims are made, for the first time, 7 months after this dinner took place. Mr. Katz will cooperate in any and all investigations or lawsuits by telling the absolute and whole truth. Hopefully Ms. Dugan will do the same."

The Grammys are Sunday.