HP CEO Ousted Over Sexual Harassment Claim

Jordan Robertson, AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The woman at the center of the sexual harassment claim that forced the resignation of Hewlett-Packard Co. CEO Mark Hurd revealed her identity Sunday and said she is "surprised and saddened" that Hurd lost his job.

Jodie Fisher, 50, an actress and businesswoman, knew Hurd through her contract jobs with HP's marketing department from 2007 to 2009. HP paid her up to $5,000 per event to greet people and make introductions among executives attending HP events that she helped organize.

Fisher echoed Hurd's statement that the two never had a sexual relationship, but neither she nor her lawyer, celebrity attorney Gloria Allred, would discuss details of the harassment claim.

That claim set off the chain of events that led to the discovery of allegedly falsified expense reports for dinners Hurd had with Fisher and ended in Hurd's forced resignation Friday from the world's largest technology company.

Fisher acknowledged that she and Hurd have settled the matter. A person familiar with the case told The Associated Press that Hurd agreed to pay Fisher but would not reveal the size of the payment.

"I was surprised and saddened that Mark Hurd lost his job over this," Fisher said in a statement. "That was never my intention."

Allred, said Fisher is a single mother who is "focused on raising her young son."

Fisher has also worked as a saleswoman, an executive at a commercial real estate company, and as an actress. She appeared in some racy R-rated movies in her 30s and most recently was on a dating show called "Age of Love," in which women competed for the attention of tennis star Mark Philippoussis.

Hurd settled with Fisher on Thursday, a day before he resigned. The settlement did not involve a payment from HP, the person close to the case said.

This person, who spoke on a condition of anonymity, was not authorized to speak publicly about the issue.

The investigation by HP's board of directors found that Hurd listed other people as his dinner partners on expense reports when he'd been out with Fisher. HP also claimed Hurd arranged for her to be paid for work she didn't do.

There was only one instance in which that occurred, the person close to the case said, but it was for an event that was canceled at the last minute and that Fisher's

contract required that she would be paid unless an event was canceled 30 days in advance.

The amount of money in question wasn't known.

Hurd, 53, insists they were legitimate business expenses. Hurd says the errors in the reports may have been entered unwittingly by an assistant, according to the person close to the case.

The company determined Hurd didn't violate its sexual harassment policy but broke its rules of conduct and irreparably harmed his credibility and integrity.

Interim CEO Cathie Lesjak said during a conference call with reporters Sunday that investors and big customers she has spoken with have been "extremely supportive."

"They respect how we dealt with the situation with transparency and speed. The bottom line is, the HP brand is strong," she said. Under Hurd, HP spent more than $20 billion on acquisitions to transform itself from a computer and printer maker dependent on ink sales for profits to a well-rounded seller of hardware and lucrative business services.

Hurd, who spent 25 years at ATM maker NCR Corp. before coming to HP in April 2005, became a Wall Street darling. HP's market value nearly doubled during his five years. HP's stock fell nearly 10 percent to $41.85 in after-hours trading Friday, when the news was released.

"One thing happened in this company on Friday — that is the CEO left," Lesjak said Sunday. "The rest of the company did not change."

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