Clausen, 2 aides face Civil Service charges

By JOHN LaPLANTE
Capitol news bureau

Education Superintendent Tom Clausen and two of his aides conspired to commit fraud and contempt of the Civil Service Commission by hiring five people for jobs they did not perform, according to charges filed Wednesday.

The commission accepted the non-criminal charges alleged by its director, Herb Sumrall, and voted to call a public hearing, probably in September, to consider them.

Clausen, Deputy Superintendent Jim L. Knotts and Ronald Carriere, superintendent of Special School District No. 1, are charged with putting five people on the school district's payroll who actually performed duties that had no relation to the district's operations.

The district is in charge of educating about 1,600 handicapped youngsters housed in state institutions.

Department of Education officials have acknowledged that many people officially hired to teach or perform other services for handicapped students never showed up for their jobs, but instead performed other duties — often as aides to higher-ranking employees in the department.

The Civil Service Department recently ordered the dismissal of 11 Education employees, including three whose employment was the basis for the charges leveled Wednesday.

Each of the five charges carries a maximum fine of $500.

Last year, Clausen was reprimanded by the commission, but not fined, for placing six people in high positions that had previously been abolished by the commission.

Knotts said he could not respond to the charges until he receives them.

Clausen and Carriere were not available for comment. Clausen reportedly was out of the state attending the funeral of a relative.

The charges leveled Wednesday involve:

- Paul Fresina Jr., who officially was hired to find jobs for handicapped students at Louisiana Training Institute, but actually was serving as a personal assistant to Clausen.
- Charles Forbes Sr., formally the supervisor of reading for the special education department of Education Superintendent Tom Clausen and two of his aides conspired to commit fraud and contempt of the Civil Service Commission by hiring five people for jobs they did not perform, according to charges filed Wednesday.

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