Lalonde Loses Grant

By Advertiser Capital Bureau

BATON ROUGE — The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education has canceled seven grants it says Superintendent of Education Tom Clausen made illegally — including one to Sunset Rep. Raymond “LaLa” Lalonde.

BESE voted yesterday to turn down the contracts, which allotted money for new programs for special education. Most of the money involved is federal funds.

Clausen already had hired people to fill positions created by the grants and most had been on the job since August. Several quit other jobs to take the positions offered by Clausen.

BESE members have complained that most of the people hired by Clausen were not qualified for the positions and that the jobs were given as political payoffs.

Already Decided

Lalonde, who has had training for the position he was to receive, said yesterday he had already made up his mind not to keep the grant awarded to him by Clausen and will return to his teaching position at T.H. Harris Vo-Tech School in Opelousas.

BESE approved an extension on Lalonde’s leave without pay from the vo-tech school until Oct. 31.

“I didn’t know what kind of contract I was getting into,” Lalonde said.

Joe Kyle, the Department of Education’s financial adviser, asked the Board to allow the grants to continue through the fiscal year, which ends in June.

Board member John Bertrand agreed with Kyle and said the awards were “not illegal.”

“Superintendent Clausen is within his rights to help his friends,” Bertrand said. “As former Superintendent Kelly Nix said ‘If you can’t help your friends, who can you help?’”

But Board member Milton Hamel

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