

All sides silent on BA suspension

by: SARA PLUMMER World Staff Writer
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BROKEN ARROW — The school board voted 3-2 during a special meeting Monday night to send a letter to Superintendent Jim Sisney outlining the reasons for his possible dismissal. He should receive it in a few days.

Until then, Sisney and his attorney, Gary Richardson, aren't commenting.

Neither are the board members. Board President Terry Stover and board members Maryanne Flippo, Stephanie Updike and Shari Wilkins said they could not comment on the grounds for suspending Sisney and seeking his eventual termination because it is a personnel matter. The fifth board member, Sharon Whelpley, did not return calls Tuesday.

Sisney's contract contains no references to termination procedures, other than to say the contract is subject to state laws, rules and regulations. Julie Miller, the general counsel for the Oklahoma State School Boards Association, said that in the absence of specific termination procedures, the board must follow state law: Title 70, Sections 6-101.13 and 6-101.14.

According to those sections, Sisney will receive a written list of the reasons for seeking his dismissal and outlining his right to a hearing before the school board. He then will have 10 days to request a hearing. After any such hearing, the board would vote on his dismissal.

If Sisney does not respond within 10 days, he waives his right to a hearing, and the board would then decide whether to fire him.

The board voted 3-2 Monday night to suspend Sisney immediately, banning him from school grounds without board approval and making him turn in his keys.

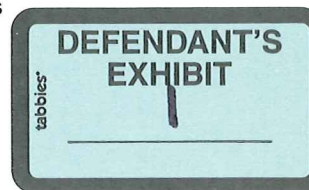
The board also voted 3-2 to name Gary Gerber, who was incorrectly referred to as the district's chief operating officer by a board member during the meeting, as the interim superintendent.

A school district newsletter shows that Gerber, who graduated from Broken Arrow High School in 1968, has been the district's assistant superintendent of operations since July 2000. He announced his retirement this spring, and his last day was scheduled to be Dec. 31.

Gerber came to work for the district in 1974, working as a psychometrist for three years and then as its director of special services for 23 years. He would not comment Tuesday.

In September, Sisney filed a defamation lawsuit against the owners of Air Assurance, one of the district's vendors. He amended the suit this month to include the three board members who voted to suspend him — Flippo, Whelpley and Wilkins — as co-defendants.

The suit says Sisney decided in June to eliminate the positions of Gerber and Director of Maintenance Bill Miller after questions were raised about the handling of Air Assurance's business practices. Miller has retired.



Stover and Updike said they see Gerber's appointment as the interim superintendent as a conflict of interest for him because he is mentioned in Sisney's lawsuit.

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SUSPENDED

Superintendent Jim Sisney: He had filed a defamation suit against a district vendor and later added three school board members to it.

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