

'Slush fund' gets special attention from DOE: State to probe Everett super's cash handling

By Kevin Rothstein

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The state Department of Education will investigate charges that Everett's school superintendent misspent special education money, a spokeswoman said.

"We're going to have to look closely at the audit and try to figure out exactly what happened," DOE spokeswoman Heidi Perlman said.

Everett city auditor Frank "Skip" Coppola has accused school Superintendent Frederick Foresteire of using a \$218,000 "slush fund" of special education money for other purposes, many unrelated to special education, including dinners at the Silver Fox restaurant for teachers, \$53,000 on local newspaper ads and \$24,000 for homecoming parades.

Some in the special education community reacted with dismay to the report detailed in yesterday's Herald.

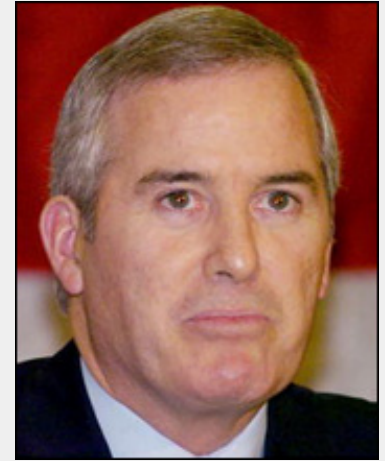
"They could have hired additional therapists or get a special educator or get some other services," said Susan Gervais Peyton of the Mass. Association of Special Education Parent Advisory Councils. "But where these funds were expended, I just think was irresponsible."

Sources have said State Auditor Joseph DeNucci's team, which is nearly finished with a comprehensive review of school finances, is also focusing on the special education account operated out of the Shore Educational Collaborative, to which Everett and nine other school districts belong.

Foresteire, who is awaiting trial on charges he had two school-bought air conditioners installed in his home, said all the expenditures were legitimate and that he wasn't limited to spending the money just on special education.

Everett Mayor David Ragucci said he was concerned because the spending occurred without school committee or city council approval.

"Even though the vast amount of the money was spent for the children, it's accountability in my eyes - taxpayers should know where their tax dollars are going," he said.



Everett School Superintendent Frederick Foresteire allegedly misspent special ed money. (Herald file)

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