

Boss' firing results in charges

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The head of a well-known funeral home company faces a misdemeanor charge for allegedly threatening the Rich Township High School District 227 Board president after she voted to fire his daughter-in-law.

Spencer Leak Sr., 76, 9157 S. Constance Ave., Chicago, was charged Tuesday with disorderly conduct in connection with an incident Saturday at a special school board meeting at Rich East High School, Park Forest police said.

In a controversial move, the school board voted 4 to 3 to immediately dismiss Donna Simpson Leak, who had been superintendent since 2010. About 150 people attended the meeting.

Board president Cheryl Coleman told police that Leak Sr., Donna Leak's father-in-law, walked up to her after the meeting, pointed at her by holding "his fingers like a gun" and said he was going to get her. When she asked what he intended, Leak Sr. told her that it was "for him to know and for Coleman to find out," according to police.

Coleman told police that Leak Sr.'s threat left her fearful and worried for her safety, and she requested extra police surveillance at her house, police said.

They said Leak Sr. denied threatening Coleman, saying speakers at the meeting had "attacked his family," calling them "gang members" and "carpetbaggers." He told police that he planned to speak at the board meeting set for 7 p.m. Thursday at the District 227 administration center, 20550 Cicero Ave.

On Monday, Leak Sr. declined to comment, other than to deny Coleman's allegation. He did not respond to a message left on Tuesday. He is president of Leak and Sons Funeral Home, which has funeral homes in Chicago and Country Club Hills.

Coleman stood by her statement to police.

"When the action happened in the building, it frightened me and I was shocked and the natural thing was to report it to the authorities," she said. "I heard him very clear."

In a statement following the board's vote Saturday, Coleman said Donna Leak was fired for "gross improprieties" in the process for student expulsions, for recommending that the board enter into unenforceable contracts with several administrators and for improperly denying a board member access to the administration center. The issues required that she be dismissed immediately, Coleman said.

Leak's attorney, Steven Glink, said there was "no question" she would file a lawsuit against the district regarding her firing, likely by week's end. Leak has five years left on her contract at a salary of \$200,000 per year.

"I will defend her to the max," Glink said.



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