

Wyrosdick demands review of Santa Rosa sports programs

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MILTON — Santa Rosa County School District Superintendent Tim Wyrosdick announced Thursday the suspension of all stipends to coaches in the school system and put a moratorium on volunteer coaches until the school district completes its investigation.

The State Attorney's Office reported Wednesday that alleged payments to numerous coaches lacked sufficient criminal evidence but likely violated school district policies.

More than a dozen coaches and high school administrators, primarily at Milton High School, allegedly violated school policy by making payments to coaches for teams that didn't exist or teams they failed to do any work for.

Wyrosdick said he asked Conni Carnley, assistant superintendent for human resources, David Gunter, director of Labor Relations and Compliance, and Liz West, human resources director, to expand the investigation into all six high schools and verify their sports programs follow school system rules.

Additionally, everyone involved in athletics in the district must undergo training on making proper payments and the process for hiring volunteer coaches, Wyrosdick ordered.

He said he would bring any warranted discipline actions to the school

board for their approval against coaches, athletic directors, principals, assistant principals and other administrators. Wyrosdick also said while the investigation continues he would not comment on it. School board members were also cautioned by their attorney about making comments, too.

“We will investigate policy violations until I am sure we have been thorough,” Wyrosdick said at Thursday’s school board meeting. “I will make recommendations of discipline as the investigation continues or wait until the end. We will make sure (coaches) accurately reflect the direction of the board and needs of the students.”

Among possible violations at Milton High School uncovered by school district investigators was that Milton High Principal Tim Short approved stipends to Tracy Worrell, so her husband, Danny, could continue as the assistant softball coach during the 2015-2016 school year. He failed to meet the requirements for a coaching certificate.

Their 17-page report also said in 2016-2017 that Milton football coach Harry Lees received payment for coaching the ninth grade soccer and volleyball teams, even though they didn’t exist. Both the soccer coach, Emidio Degraça and the volleyball coach, Chelsea Adams, said he failed to provide any conditioning or weight training to their players.

Meanwhile, investigators alleged Keith Cone received payment as the head coach for the girls varsity, junior varsity and ninth grade basketball teams from 2014-2015 to 2018-2019.

Many other questionable actions regarding payments and volunteer coaches also took place the district investigators reported.

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