

Annette school board members cite conflicts in resignation

The Associated Press

METLAKATLA — Three of the five members of the Annette Island School Board resigned last week when they discovered they would be unable to vote on a contract covering the district's classified employees because they had relatives on the staff.

"It really caused quite a problem," said School Superintendent Larrae Rocheleau. "Since four out of the five members had to abstain from the vote, we couldn't even second the motion for acceptance of the agreement."

State law prohibits public officials from voting on matters that directly affect their mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, grandparents, spouses or immediate in-laws.

Rocheleau said that left the board with three options:

"One, we could have the members resign. Two, we could

release the classified staff members. Or, three, we could do nothing.

"Three of the four 'conflicted' members decided that it would be better to resign," Rocheleau said.

So Solomon Atkinson, Kathleen Guthrie and Frieda Haldane stepped down.

There were eight relatives of board members among the district's 18 employees, Rocheleau said. About 1,000 people

live in the island community south of Ketchikan.

"The incident was very unfortunate for the district," Rocheleau said. "We've lost three board members who were very supportive of the schools."

Atkinson said the small district is on the verge of complete accreditation. "We felt that it would be better if we didn't upset the process by remaining on the board," he said.