

# Big Foot

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After accepting Big Foot's offer, Deninger applied for a principal's job in Oregon, Illinois, located just south of Rockford. The salary was slightly lower at \$102,000 a year, but with better job benefits, her take-home pay would be \$3,000 a month more.

She landed the other job and submitted a resignation to Big Foot on May 23 — five weeks before she was scheduled to start work.

To get out of an employment contract that she had signed with Big Foot, Deininger agreed to pay a \$3,000 penalty.

The unusual turn of events has left people in the Big Foot community surprised and dismayed.

Sharon Village President Mark Ruosch said that while he understands the motivation of wanting more money, he feels dis-

**'What it comes down to is the color of money. It's a dog-eat-dog world in education.' — Big Foot District Administrator Doug Parker, shown at right**



appointed for all the local kids who aspire to become Big Foot students.

"It leaves us in a lurch," Ruosch said. "And I guess we don't appreciate that."

After word of her resignation got out, Deininger said she did not fully understand how much her take-home pay in Wisconsin would differ from Illinois, under state-mandated job benefits. She also noted that she is a single mother who is trying to put her children through college.

Big Foot School Board member Gretchen McCarthy said she still believes Deininger was the right choice for principal. McCarthy said she empathizes

with a single mother trying to do what is best for her family.

"Family comes first," McCarthy said.

Because of the timing, however, Deininger's decision has limited Big Foot's ability to respond.

Parker said other applicants who were considered for the job — including the district's second choice — have since taken jobs elsewhere and no longer are available. Most such job searches in public schools take place around January, and most positions are filled by now, he said.

Manghera, whose union represents 27 faculty members at Big Foot, said some teachers have ex-

pressed concern about the principal's job being up in the air as summer vacation begins.

"We now have a hole there," the veteran math teacher said.

Parents, too, are reacting with surprise to the new principal's abrupt departure.

Margaret Labus, PTO president at Fontana Elementary School, said she has heard disappointment from parents, although some, she said, can relate to wanting to earn more money to support one's family.

The mother of two elementary-aged school kids, Labus said she hopes school board members can find a principal who wants to make a long-term commitment to Big Foot.

Of Deininger's resignation, Labus said, "It was definitely something that I don't think anyone saw coming. But what we had to offer just wasn't enough to keep her."