

Gutierrez enters plea of 'not guilty'

□ **Hearing set for Friday**
on whether Vancouver
School Board president
can continue to live with
three grandchildren

By **BRUCE WESTFALL**
The Columbian

Vancouver School Board President Paul Gutierrez pleaded not guilty this morning to five counts of child sexual abuse involving a female relative.

In front of a gallery of friends, family, onlookers and reporters, the 68-year-old school official told Superior Court Judge Robert Harris five times, "I plead not guilty, your honor," in answer to each of the charges.

Harris set a trial date of Jan. 10, 1994.

The charges stem from what prosecutors allege were a series of incidents with the girl, now 15, over 5½ years from the time she was 9 until last November when she was 14. Prosecutors say the incidents took place at Gutierrez's home, 4402 Idaho St.

The youngster is now living in California. Deputy Prosecutor Kim Farr told the judge during today's arraignment.

Farr said after the court session that Gutierrez could face more than 10 years in prison if convicted on all counts. The charges include first-degree rape of a child, first-degree child molestation, second-degree rape of a child, second-degree child molestation and third-degree child molestation. Gutierrez is a former longtime school teacher and administrator in the Vancouver School District. He told The Columbian last week, "I deny it emphatically. I'm just hoping that everyone will give me the privilege of a presumption of innocence until this goes through the process." He said he plans to remain on the school board.



**Paul
Gutierrez**

Faces five
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Meanwhile, the judge scheduled a hearing Friday to decide whether Gutierrez can continue to live with his three grandchildren, ages 5, 3 and 22 months. Farr asked Harris to bar Gutierrez from unsupervised contact with youngsters. He alluded in court this morning to a "history" of abuse involving one other victim, but afterwards he said he could not elaborate outside court. He said those allegations may be detailed during pre-trial hearings in the case.

Farr said it's common that defendants in sex cases are forbidden from living with young children. He said it "potentially puts children at risk."

Gutierrez told the judge he lives at his home with his wife, a daughter and her three children.

The list of charges allege that Gutierrez had "multiple instances" of either "sexual intercourse" or other "sexual contact" with the alleged victim from July 1987 through November 1992. Farr said the girl "disclosed" the allegations earlier this year.

Farr asked Harris for a trial date prior to Thanksgiving, saying the case involved a "simple fact situation." He said prolonging the trial would be an unnecessary burden for the girl and her family. Gutierrez's attorney, Steve Thayer, argued for a later date, saying "a great deal is at stake here." Harris opted for January. He set aside five days for the trial.