

Release date on Danner report delayed

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A report on alleged financial irregularities in the Santa Cruz County District Attorney's Office won't be released until next week, county Auditor Gary Knutson said this morning.

Knutson had planned to release the report this week, but said there were problems in scheduling meetings with people involved.

The key issue in Knutson's review is District Attorney Art Danner's firing of Catherine Gardner, an assistant district attorney.

Gardner was given a notice of intent to dismiss in April, but was kept on the payroll for three months before she was fired. County rules say a person should not be on the payroll for more than five days under such circumstances.

Gardner was fired after admitting snorting what she thought was cocaine in 1993; she said she was forced to by an abusive boyfriend. Gardner said later she didn't believe the substance was cocaine.

Gardner said Danner kept her on the payroll to avoid publicity during his campaign for reelection in June; Danner said he did it so he could try to work out a settlement for Gardner, an assistant district attorney for nine years.

Knutson is looking into several other alleged irregularities. He wouldn't comment on published reports that he would recommend a review by the state Attorney General or that he would ask Danner to repay \$30,000 paid to Gardner.

Knutson said today he has changed his preliminary recommendations several times in the last few weeks as new information has come in.

The matter will go to County Supervisors Dec. 6.