

An action-filled June 15 Board of Education meeting included a non-violent sit-in by four civil rights leaders, a vote to spend \$82,500 plus unspecified expenses to hire a Chicago-based search firm to help hire the next Superintendent, and a confusing vote on an interim budget, and it ended with the purchase of a 143.26 acre site for the H6 High School northeast of downtown Rolesville and a vote to leave the National School Board Association and the North Carolina School Board Association.

The meeting opened with the re-election of Ron Margiotta as chair and Debra Goldman as vice-chair, although Keith Sutton was nominated to serve in both positions. The votes were 5-4, with members Mr. Margiotta, Ms. Goldman, Mr. Malone, Ms. Prickett and Mr. Tedesco voting in support of Mr. Margiotta and Ms. Goldman continuing their current roles.

The Board also voted to retain Tharrington Smith as the board's attorney, with Ann Majestic continuing to provide lead counsel.

After hearing a summary of preschool services within WCPSS, Board members, including Ms. Goldman asked Cynthia Chamblee, director of Project Enlightenment, to explain the impact of the Reductions in Force that cut their staff by 29 percent. Ms. Chamblee said the parent counseling services will no longer be available in the county. During the public comment, many speakers voiced support for Project Enlightenment's services.

After about a dozen speakers, Mr. Margiotta called for a recess, although NAACP President William Barber asked to be heard. Mr. Margiotta said Rev. Barber would be heard following the recess, but as some Board members were leaving, parent Mary Williams, who was with Rev. Barber, began to speak about the impact of segregated schools on students. She began by quoting the spiritual "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," and continued to speak. Board members Anne McLaurin, Keith Sutton and Carolyn Morrison remained to hear Ms. Williams and then also hear Professor Tim Tyson of Duke University begin an address on the history of racial segregation in North Carolina and the South.

Dr. Tyson highlighted antebellum and Jim Crow era laws that restricted the movement and commerce of African Americans, and he detailed the story of 19th century leader John

Chavis, who founded a successful school in Raleigh before being chased out and eventually murdered after settling in Granville County. During his address, Mr. Tedesco joined the others in listening. Once Mr. Margiotta returned with other board members from the recess, Ms. Williams repeated her talk, and Pastor Nancy Petty, who leads Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, challenged the Board to consider who was benefiting from their policies, wealthy students or vulnerable students. "I will not allow you to return my schools to segregation without a fight," she said. Dr. Tyson said that in the 1960s, Gov. George Wallace of Alabama used the term "neighborhood schools" to rationalize racial segregation. Rev. Barber stated that the Board majority's abandonment of diversity in the schools "wiped their feet on the labors of my ancestors" to achieve equality in public education. He admitted that Wake schools were not perfect, but that they had made moderate progress. He said that almost all of the 44 lowest performing schools in North Carolina were racially identifiable as having high concentrations of children of color and that those schools had difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers. He said the four were speaking today to voice support for keeping schools integrated, and he'd asked Mr. Margiotta for 45 minutes to address the Board. After about 20 minutes, Mr. Margiotta called for another recess, and all Board members except Mr. Tedesco left, while Rev. Barber, Rev. Petty, Ms. Williams and Dr. Tyson moved and occupied the Board members' seats, staging a sit-in. They continued to address the crowd in the audience regarding segregated schools and links to racial and socio-economic isolation and low student achievement.

Mr. Margiotta and other Board members returned after about 20-30 minutes with 10 Raleigh police officers and arrested the four speakers. They were led out in handcuffs, while all four continued singing civil rights era songs.

Mr. Margiotta continued the public hearing, allowing Charlotte Turpin, a retired teacher who taught for 31 years and now heads up the Harriett Webster Task Force for Student Success, to speak. She accused the Board of failing to compromise and that they were failing to shift from a position that they knew was wrong.

The Board then initially defeated, by the same 5-4 vote, a resolution on an interim budget. The proposed interim budget had been based on the budget they had approved in April. Ms. Goldman said she had many reservations about that budget, not explaining why she had voted in support of it in April. Without naming her specific concerns, she and others

discussed the ramifications of not having a budget for the next month. Given staff would not be paid if an interim budget was not adopted, the Board then voted to approve the resolution, after amendments were added stating that this was not a final budget. A final budget is not possible until after the County Commissioners act on final financing numbers for the school district.

In preparation for the hiring of a new Superintendent, the Board voted 5-4 to revise the qualifications for the post, eliminating the requirement that the Superintendent have a doctorate or the equivalent and also eliminating a requirement that the candidate have three years' experience in school work in the past 10 years. Ms. Goldman spoke in great lengths in support of both deletions, saying she wanted to broaden the net of candidates and that those qualifications were not necessary and overly restrictive. Mr. Tedesco spoke more bluntly, saying the Board was interested in having a business or private sector leader as head of the school district. Those voting to delete the additional qualifications were Mr. Margiotta, Ms. Goldman, Mr. Malone, Ms. Prickett and Mr. Tedesco.

It was then moved to waive the second reading of the policy change and approve it that evening, but that vote failed 5-4, as it required a two-thirds majority. Thus the policy will require a second reading, most likely at the Board's newly scheduled July 20 meeting.

The Board voted 5-4 to hire Heidrick & Struggles, based in Chicago, to help conduct a national search for a Superintendent for the WCPSS at a cost of \$82,500 plus unspecified expenses. Board member Kevin Hill stated support for another firm, Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, a national firm that specializes in public school searches and whose fees were \$35,000 plus specified \$4,000 to \$5,000 expenses. However, the majority went with Heidrick & Struggles, which has conducted two Superintendent searches in Houston and Buffalo, NY, and has more experience with charter schools, private schools, and higher education.

The Board also approved by a 7-1 vote the purchase of a 143.26 acre site in Rolesville, near the intersections of Rolesville and Quarry roads, for the new H6 High School in the North Central corridor, which has a severe shortage of high school capacity. Dr. McLaurin was the lone dissenting vote. The site was claimed to be \$4 million cheaper than the original H6 site

and is further removed from the high growth Wakefield area, but the Board and staff hope it may be open by 2013.

The Board closed its meeting by voting 5-4 to leave the National School Boards Association and the N.C. School Boards Association. Wake County Public schools will be the only district in the state to not be a member of these two organizations.

The Board voted 7-1 to retain its membership in the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges, which is recognized nationally by colleges and universities as well as the military for evaluating high school graduates. Mr. Tedesco voted against continuing the membership that allows for accreditation of the school system.