

Board takes no action on Chiapetti

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
Friday, 26 August 2016 02:49



MANUELITO: Next meeting might yield decision

The Gallup McKinley County School Board took no action Aug. 24 on the job status of Superintendent Frank Chiapetti. A special meeting was held purely for closed-session purposes to discuss personnel matters related to the supervision, evaluation, and employment contract of the superintendent, as well as a report on personnel.

The meeting, conducted at the cafeteria of Tohatchi High School, the alma mater of board member Kevin Mitchell, went nearly four hours. Board members emerged from the meeting with a synopsis that wasn't what those in attendance had expected.

"We talked about everything except the report on personnel," Board President Priscilla Manuelito said after the meeting. "And that's all I can say at the moment."

For months, the board has repeatedly postponed an evaluation of Chiapetti for undisclosed reasons. Chiapetti earns an annual salary of around \$132,000.

"I'm in the dark," Chiapetti said. "I still don't know much. I'm in the dark."

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Manuelito said some action on the discussed matters would probably be brought forward on the next school-board meeting agenda. Items are placed on the board agenda the Wednesday before regular meetings.

“I don’t know exactly what will be on the agenda at this time,” Manuelito said. “The board members will present what they want on the agenda and other items will be placed on the agenda, too. On Wednesday of next week we will have a clearer idea of what the agenda looks like.”

The next school-board meeting is scheduled for Sept. 6 at the district office on Boardman Drive.

Asked why no action was taken after many hours, while close to 100 parents, teachers, and administrators patiently waited, Manuelito said everything has its proper timeline. She did not comment further.

GALLUP CITY HALL

The matter has become rather controversial and uncertain. City Attorney George Kozeliski fired off a three-paragraph letter to Dan Hill, general counsel of the New Mexico Public Education Department, dated Aug. 17.

“I write this letter on behalf of Mayor Jackie McKinney who is out of state this week,” Kozeliski began. “The mayor, other city leaders and myself have been inundated with calls regarding the Gallup-McKinley County School Board of Education and the callers wanting the city of Gallup to somehow fix a problem in which we have no control.”

Kozeliski continued, “The mayor asked if you and/or Secretary of Education Hanna Skandera, could look into the situation at the school district. The environment in our town is to a boiling point and we believe only Secretary Skandera has the authority to investigate the allegations and take whatever the appropriate action may be, if any.”

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Hill responded to Kozeliski on Aug. 19.

“I am forwarding your letter to the Secretary of State [Skandera],” he wrote. “Because the allegations involve an individual appointed to an elected office, I believe it falls within the authority of the Secretary of State. [The PED] will remain in contact with the Secretary of State’s Office to determine if any further action is necessary.”

State Sen. George Muñoz, D-Gallup, who has spoken and chastised the school board in past meetings, said the board has many unanswered questions from the taxpaying public to respond to.

“I think what they are forgetting, in part, is that they are a public board and they answer to the taxpayers of McKinley County,” Muñoz, who did not attend Wednesday’s special meeting, said. “Right now, it doesn’t appear that the board is being open and honest with taxpayers.”

One parent, whose daughter attends Gallup High, said she hasn’t seen anything like this in a long time.

“I’m not really sure what they want to do and why it’s taking so long to do it,” she said.

The Gallup-McKinley County School Board consists of Manuelito, who is president; Mitchell, vice president; Lynn Huenemann, secretary; Joe Menini; and Sandra Jeff. Jeff is the newest member of the board, and her residency status has been questioned.

***By Bernie Dotson
Sun Correspondent***