

Daily News



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OPINION

Minority viewpoint needed on SK school board

By Jeff Daily • February 7, 2023 1:30 am



I was not given a chance to respond in an article published in this newspaper relating to a Jan. 4 board meeting, so it has graciously allowed me to do so here.

Listening to the audio of the South Kitsap School District board meeting one can hear where director John Berg fails to accurately recite the pertinent laws I requested, and directors Jeffrey Wilson and Kate Espy offer their own critical comments regarding my displeasure. Wilson offers more inappropriate comments suggesting my actions were “antics” and implied a “mental issue” as well as illegally muting me. He then abruptly stopped the meeting. Their dialog sounded scripted because the other board members and superintendent Tim Winter were in possession of a letter by Wilson drafted dated Dec. 21, 2022. The joke was on me.

Wilson’s letter is nothing short of a demand seeking my immediate resignation. The district’s law firm delayed transmitting Wilson’s letter to my attorney, thus I was not aware of it until Jan. 6, two days after the board meeting.

Why would Wilson demand that I resign my seat now? Union and district politics stand out, as I am perceived to be a threat to the status quo for both should I choose to run for re-election. I apparently represent a threat to secretive South Kitsap Education Association negotiations for the ever-increasing pay raises and employee perks. Disparaging me at meetings and now this demand for my resignation is clearly an attempt to strengthen their cherry-picked candidate’s chances of winning my seat.

Wilson’s letter alleges three conflicts. First, a grievance filed by my spouse against the district. Wilson alleges that I interfered in the complaint process. How? Because I support my wife? She has her own attorney so there are no ethical or legal restrictions with a spouse offering support. There is a legal issue now since this board has violated my spouse’s rights to confidentiality. Grievances must be kept confidential, yet the board knew all about this grievance. How did the board know when only two other district and union people attended the grievance meeting? Who leaked the information to Wilson and the board?

Secondly, the letter alleges that I continue stating my concerns regarding 403 additional unfunded district employees that the state does not pay for and costs local taxpayers over \$30 million a year. That concern has yet to be addressed, and I cannot support the November bond measure until it is resolved. Wilson and the board complain this is not “proper” behavior. With student enrollment falling, which affects the budget, and academic scores continuing to decline, this is not only “proper,” but actually required due diligence. Isn’t money for students the taxpayer’s first priority?

Finally, Wilson alleges I inappropriately spoke with various banks in our community to explore other local financing options for the proposed bond(s). He claims, then legislates, that only he is authorized to speak to the community. Exactly where in the law and Constitution is that written? The board and the district talk a lot about community partnerships. They say we need their support for the district, yet facts show otherwise. When I apprised local businesses of the district’s proposed funding plans, none had heard of them. No one at the district bothered to ask them if they wish to help. Using a Seattle bond broker will enrich them with millions in commissions on the sale of the proposed bonds vs. our local institutions. I am the only board member who reviews the district’s bills and accounts. I have many examples documenting the district’s use of businesses outside of our community. Thankfully, our businesses remain committed to the students and district.

Currently, the board carries a 4-1 majority of votes, so why the attempt to stifle the “minority” member’s voice? Apparently, diverse opinions aren’t wanted, and they certainly don’t consider the minority voice equal. Last year, Wilson held an

illegal executive session over a comment he considered a threat to his ego. His illegal actions were an attempt to intimidate me. Now he works on shredding my reputation and attempts to socially shame me. Our community is certainly tired of hearing all of the arguments and discord among board members. But it is far easier for Wilson, Berg and the others to scapegoat me for all the board's ills and dysfunction by requesting my resignation.

Jeff Daily is a school board director for the South Kitsap School District.

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