

NEWS & RECORD

Guilford superintendent gets contract extension, set to stay until 2022

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GREENSBORO — The Guilford County Board of Education voted Saturday to extend the superintendent's contract through June 30, 2022.

In the same 6-1 vote, the board also gave Superintendent Sharon Contreras an additional \$10,000 to go into a qualified retirement plan. The board met Saturday for a retreat in a conference room at the International Civil Rights Center and Museum in downtown Greensboro.

The vote came just after the board completed its first formal evaluation of Contreras, who has served as superintendent since August 2016, and released a public message summarizing that evaluation.

Board members commended Contreras for her “thorough work” on the district’s strategic plan and her “strong management leadership” in difficult situations and weather disasters faced by the district, among efforts in other areas. They did not spell out any direct critiques of Contreras in the evaluation message.

“While the Board acknowledges that changing culture is difficult in any large institution, they appreciate the willingness shown by the Superintendent to confront hard issues and communicate a clear vision of high expectations for all children in Guilford County,” the board said in its message. “The Board understands that great changes in our district are hard and that we need to support our staff and community to create a balance between valuing our past and moving forward.”

Chairwoman Deena Hayes-Greene, Vice Chairwoman T. Dianne Bellamy-Small and board members Byron Gladden, Pat Tillman, Winston McGregor and Khem Irby voted in favor, while board member Linda Welborn voted against.

Board members Anita Sharpe and Darlene Garrett were absent for the vote. All board members, including those absent, filled out individual evaluation forms ahead of time.

Garrett expressed disappointment at the last regular school board meeting that Saturday's board retreat had been rescheduled to a day and time she had a prior commitment, her son's swearing in as a state senator.

Sharpe arrived later in the morning.

In a brief interview, Sharpe said she was disappointed not only that the day of the work session had changed, but also that Hayes-Greene and other board members agreed to a last-minute change on Saturday that moved the closed session discussion on the evaluation results and the vote earlier in the meeting's schedule. It had originally been set for the afternoon.

"She knew I wasn't going to be here until 11:30; it was intentional," Sharpe said. "I would have voted, without a doubt, not to extend."

She said her vote wasn't personal, but that she wouldn't support extending the superintendent contract two years without hard data to show Contreras is leading the district to achieve its academic goals. The form they used for this evaluation isn't set up well to assess that, she said.

Council of Great City Schools consultants and board retreat facilitators A.J Crabill and Michael Casserly later told Sharpe they were the ones to propose the change to the schedule, and they had no idea which school board members would or wouldn't be there. Sharpe said after the meeting she is still suspicious the change was purposeful.

Hayes-Greene, in an interview, said she proposed the schedule change based on that recommendation and went forward with it with the agreement of the other board members present. She said she had heard from Sharpe that she might have to be late, but she didn't know how late or the 11:30 a.m. arrival and wasn't thinking about it one way or the other.

She denied any intention to reschedule the vote to exclude Sharpe.

"I would never do that," Hayes-Greene said.

Casserly and Crabill wanted to get the evaluation out of the way and spend the majority of time laying the groundwork for a different kind of superintendent's evaluation tool to be used next fall.

They are urging board members to tie their format for the evaluation to progress toward academic goals the district set last winter. So they spent most of the day talking with board members about what that might look like, and how concepts like "goals" and "constraints" factor in.

In an interview, Contreras said as an employee, she would like feedback on her efforts each year. She said she also agrees with wanting to change the evaluation to be based more on the goals. She also said she's excited for the contract extension and now expects to be able to stay long enough to see the effects of major turnaround efforts.