

**Rochester Democrat & Chronicle**

## **RCSD to pay \$52K in settlement with CFO Carleen Pierce, complaint documents not released**

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The Rochester City School District will pay Chief Financial Officer Carleen Pierce \$52,500 according to the terms of a settlement agreement approved by the school board Tuesday.

The board resolution refers to a state Division of Human Rights complaint that Pierce filed against the district. The issue at the heart of the complaint remains unknown to the public.

The Democrat and Chronicle formally requested the document from the Division of Human Rights last month but has not received it. The agency this week said it would respond by June 8 but could delay its response further.

Neither Pierce, her attorney nor the district would provide the complaint or summarize its contents, and board members said they do not have a copy of it.

Pierce has been on leave since April while she and the district negotiated the terms of her departure. She remains employed by the district and on leave while the final legal agreement is being drafted, RCSD spokeswoman Marisol Ramos-Lopez said.

Neither side has publicly discussed the nature of the rift. The Democrat and Chronicle also has requested the separation agreement, once finalized.

Pierce was hired in August 2020 after having served as CFO for East High School. Her salary is \$162,000 a year, according to the most recent public figures.

In her absence, former RCSD budget director Vern Connors is helping the district through the budget process as an administrative substitute.

The board's second public deliberation on the budget will take place at 5:30 p.m. Thursday. A final board vote is scheduled for May 10, after which the budget goes to City Council for final approval.

Also Tuesday, the board approved spending up to \$50,000 in federal stimulus funding on a "high-level organizational, operational and management review of the district's business operations" by the Council of the Great City Schools, a national urban schools organization to which RCSD belongs. The review would be free, but the board approved spending the money on travel and other associated costs.

The intent, Board President Cynthia Elliott said, is for Deputy Superintendent of Operations and Systems Innovation Genelle Morris "to get a perspective via audit of the departments she is providing leadership to." Morris switched in October to oversight of the administrative side of the district rather than the academic side.

Beatriz LeBron and James Patterson voted against the resolution. The board waived its customary 48-hour notice requirement for resolutions to approve the review, which will begin next week.