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EDITOR'S PICK

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools Board of Education to hear equity coalition report

Katie Jansen Updated Dec 27, 2015

CHAPEL HILL — After months of requests, the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Board of Education has agreed to hear a report from a community coalition concerned about racial inequities in schools.

The board agreed to hold a work session in the future to allow the Campaign for Racial Equity in Our Schools to present an 87-page report it released in October.

Within the last month, coalition representatives and other community members have expressed frustration that it seemed like its request for a meeting was going unheard.



But at a recent meeting, all board members voiced support for hearing from the coalition.

Board member Michelle Brownstein said she heard the frustration but also appreciated the community's understanding as the board digested the report and dealt with the transition of instating three new board members, who were sworn in Dec. 3.

"I feel like I'm better prepared to have that conversation than I would have been if we'd just done it right away," she said. "I do appreciate the patience but still the persistence, and the very respectful but diligent (manner)."

Board member Andrew Davidson agreed, saying that now, conversation will be able to supplement the presentation. He added that he has a lot of feedback now that he's had time to read the report.

"The reputation we have as a board is we're challenging to present to," he said. "They're going to be tough conversations."

Board member Pat Heinrich advocated for a published process so that the public would be able to participate in the meeting.

The coalition first requested a meeting with the school board before beginning the report this summer. It also invited the district to work with them on the report. The board denied that request, said co-chair Wanda Hunter.



The coalition also hoped to present in October, Hunter said, but the board never took a vote, instead asking Superintendent Tom Forcella to create a plan that outlined the best way to hear the report.

Forcella returned to the board recently with a plan for a focused dialogue about the district's long-range equity plan. The dialogue would be less of a presentation and more of a discussion with multiple stakeholders, he said.

But Forcella said the board could still opt to hear the coalition's report, which could help inform the focused dialogue.

Wanda Hunter, co-chair of the coalition, said the group is pleased that the board expressed unanimous support for scheduling a work session.

She said she doesn't yet know the district's timeline. The Chapel Hill-Carrboro NAACP also plans to hold a community forum Jan. 23, to which the district will be invited.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This story has been corrected to reflect the correct date of the Jan. 23 community forum.

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