



MUSKEGON HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Muskegon Heights Public School board of education leaders resign

MUSKEGON, MI: On the heels of the very first orders issued by the state appointed Emergency Manager (EM), three members of the Muskegon Heights Public Schools Board of Education officially resigned from their positions. Board President Avery Burrell, Vice President Ronald Jenkins, and Treasurer Ivory Morris have all indicated they are stepping down from the board. An EM order late yesterday changed their role from board members to that of “advisors” and “ambassadors.”

Board President Avery Burrell stated, “Back in December when we as a board came to understand the magnitude of our debt, we set aside our personal pride to ask the state for an Emergency Manager. Now it’s time for us to allow Dr. Weatherspoon to complete the task he is charged with. We want it to be clear to this community that the EM has full authority over this district.” Burrell has served on the Muskegon Heights Public School Board for the past 11 years.

“We are in effect passing the torch,” said Ron Jenkins a board member since 2007. “We are clearing the way for the re-creation of the district under the leadership of the Emergency Manager,” he added. Jenkins indicated that he has “faith in God that Dr. Weatherspoon’s decisions will help the children in the long run. While these will be tough times, I believe Dr. Weatherspoon has the best interest of our children and our community in mind,” said Jenkins. “My advocacy will not end with my board membership, but I will continue to speak on behalf of my own son,” added Jenkins.

Ivory Morris, who has served on the board for the past 13 years said, “The decision we made months ago to request an Emergency Manager was the right one; our decision today is too. I am convinced that Dr. Weatherspoon will do things that will help the young people in our community. The focus needs to stay on our kids.”

Don Weatherspoon, Emergency Manager for Muskegon Heights Public Schools said, “This is a group of community leaders who have sacrificed personal time with their families to serve Muskegon Heights. I admire their courage to put children and the community first in their decisions to leave the board.”

Last month Weatherspoon was appointed by Governor Snyder to serve as Emergency Manager of the district under Public Act 4. Public Act 4 of 2011, also known as the Local Government and School District Fiscal Accountability Act, is the primary State law under which State officials are given the power to intervene in units of local government that experience severe financial stress or financial emergencies. The EM’s role is to analyze the district’s financial position and make necessary changes to help the district recover from its financial stress.

Muskegon Heights Public Schools have been wrestling with rising expenses, funding reductions, soaring health care costs, and declining enrollment which exhausted their fund balance and led to a deficit nearing 12 million dollars.

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