



MUSKEGON HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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EM's Orders Outline Legal Control, Limit Travel, Permit Sale of Surplus

MUSKEGON, MI: Muskegon Heights Public Schools Emergency Manager (EM) Don Weatherspoon issued the first of a series of orders this morning through a mandatory posting on the district's website at <http://www.mhpsnet.org/boardofeducation/EFM.htm>.

All three orders are directed to the Muskegon Heights Public Schools (MHPS) Board of Education, all administrators and employees of the school district.

The first order details and reinforces the legal control Public Act 4 bestows upon the EM over all matters of the district including personnel actions like hiring and firing, and the use, renovation, or redesign of school buildings and facilities. It further defines the role of the board of education as that of an "advisory capacity" and that they serve as "ambassadors" for the district and the actions needed to bring the district into compliance with all state and federal laws. The order also states that "the Emergency Manager shall implement any reorganization deemed necessary and appropriate within the school district."

The second order suspends all travel to conferences and workshops at school district expense unless the EM approves an exception in advance.

The third order issued today authorizes the sale of surplus school district equipment and supplies. The EM will select a professional auction company that will be contracted to sell items with an individual value of less than \$50,000.

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. In December 2011, MHPS Board of Education members requested an Emergency Manager from the State of Michigan. The former superintendent, Dana Bryant, retired on December 31. On January 1, 2012, the MHPS Board of Education named Muskegon Area Intermediate School District Superintendent David Sipka to the position of MHPS interim superintendent. In April, based on the recommendation of a state review team, Governor Snyder appointed Weatherspoon to serve as Emergency Manager of the district under Public Act 4. Sipka resigned his post as interim superintendent that same month.

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.

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