

Kehoe takes charge today in Greece

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GREECE — For the first time in weeks, Greece school board members have publicly agreed.

The board voted unanimously Tuesday to hire retired East Irondequoit Superintendent Josephine Kehoe to become the district's interim superintendent. One board member — Larry Sweet — missed the meeting because his car broke down in Ohio.

Kehoe, 66, of Irondequoit, will run Monroe County's largest suburban district until the school board has completed its probe into discrimination charges. Greece Superintendent Margaret Keller-Cogan and two other top administrators are on paid leave for the duration of the investigation.

Although board members do not agree on what led to the appointment,



Josephine Kehoe unanimously approved as interim superintendent.

What's next

Concerned parents, community members and business owners are holding a meeting at 7 p.m. today to discuss the Greece school board and the district. All community members are welcome to attend; the meeting, which will include a discussion, will be held in the auditorium at Olympia High School, 1139 Maiden Lane.

they said they do agree that the district needs someone to step in as leader on a temporary basis. Kehoe

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will start the job today. Details of her contract, including her salary, were not available Tuesday night.

"I'm very optimistic," Kehoe said. "I'm not a miracle worker, but people like to be heard and need to be heard."

Kehoe said she plans to meet with students, parents, community members and district employees to listen and learn more about what people are feeling within the district. From there, she said she will create a plan of action to suggest to the board.

She said she understands that she's entering a polarized district. Kehoe reiterated that she'll be focusing on educating Greece students and will not be involved in the board's investigation or complaints against Keller-Cogan.

Kehoe, who was the first female superintendent in Monroe County, is known as a top-notch educator with experience in helping fractured school districts restore harmony.

"Her reputation is impeccable," said Doug Skeet of Greece, a retired Greece principal. "I don't think they could get a better candidate."

Greece resident Dianne Beardicurti also supported the board's choice.

"If there's one thing the district needs now, it's to build collaboration and trust between the community members, board members and the district so we can get back to focusing on our children's educational opportunities," she said.

Before the meeting at Apollo Middle School Kehoe met with board members in private to discuss her potential employment.

At the same time, four concerned parents gathered in front of the school, carrying signs asking the community to focus on the students.

One picketing parent, Gary Elling, 62 of Greece, said he's worried that excessive bickering will further distract Greece residents from the goal — educating Greece children.

"It's a mess," he said. "But this is the only option the board left themselves. The fear is that the agenda is that they've always

Background

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has determined that the Greece Central School District discriminated against five teachers. As a result, the district could face five lawsuits with costs running into hundreds of thousands of dollars. Superintendent Margaret Keller-Cogan and two other administrators are on paid leave while the district conducts its own independent investigation. Josephine Kehoe has temporarily taken on the district top job.

wanted a change." The district's investigation was launched last month and is well under way. Consultant Allan Berry of Brockport is expected to complete his work by Dec. 1, said David Kresock, a partner at Harter, Secrest and Emery, the law firm representing Greece's school board.

Once the board receives the investigation results, board members will review the data and make a decision on how to proceed, said Board President Ken Walsh.

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Josephine Kehoe

Age: 66.

Education: Bachelor's degree from University of Rochester, 1959; master's from State University College at Brockport, 1969; doctorate in education, University of Rochester, 1974.

Career: Began as an English teacher in 1961 in the Coming-Painted Post school district.

Joined the Rochester School District in 1964 as a teacher, later worked as dean of students, department head, vice principal, principal and supervising director of secondary education and continuing instruction. In May 1985, she was unanimously appointed superintendent of the East Irondequoit Central School District. She retired in 1998.

Also: Since her retirement, she has served as an interim superintendent for three Rochester-area districts — Hilton, 1999-2000 and 2003-04; Spencerport, 2000-01; and Bloomfield, 2001-02.