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Board members 'humiliated' as probe persists

An investigation into teachers' discrimination complaints could continue through November.

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They jammed two board rooms and spilled over into the auditorium, presumably eager for answers.

But the many community members gathered for the Greece school board meeting Tuesday - some of whom clearly suspect Superintendent Meg Keller-Cogan may be a marked woman - were told simply to sit tight.

"Be patient," board member Joe Moscato said in response to parent Dianne Berardicurti during the meeting. Berardicurti requested that she and others in the community be provided with further details of an educational consultant's ongoing investigation of five teachers' claims they were discriminated against by members of the administration.

A representative of board legal counsel Harter Secrest & Emery said the probe could continue through the end of November. The consultant, whom the board hired last month after the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ruled in favor of five teachers who say they were treated unfairly because of their age and/or disability, began reviewing the related legal files Sept. 29 and soon will begin interviewing the people involved.

In the meantime, Josephine Kehoe - retired superintendent of Keller-Cogan's former place of employment, the East Irondequoit school district - will lead Greece Central. The board voted 8-0 Tuesday to offer Keller-Cogan's former supervisor the temporary position; member Larry Sweet was absent but did say in a statement he too would have voted in favor of the appointment.

"Thank you for inviting me to be your superintendent for the next few weeks," Kehoe said following the vote. "The current problems, which have become very public, will not be my focus."

The board majority last month placed Keller-Cogan and two other top administrators on paid leave, claiming their presence could have somehow skewed the results of the investigation. That decision has divided the community and ignited a storm of publicity aimed at the district. Keller-Cogan's supporters have expressed fear for the superintendent's job, turning out in droves at a board meeting last month and chanting her name.

"I am still not in agreement ... with the action taken against Dr. Keller-Cogan," said board minority member Gerry Phelan. "But ... it is the reality of where we are, and I do believe we need a competent administrator."

Another minority member, Bill Russell, agreed.

"This is a very unfortunate situation," he said. "I feel embarrassed."

And in his statement, Sweet called the ordeal "humiliating" and said he did not support the board's actions, which now force the district to pay two superintendents' salaries for up to six weeks. Kehoe's employment agreement is currently in the works, board President Ken Walsh said Tuesday.

One woman seated in the auditorium, where audio and visual feeds allowed the overflow



Community members once again packed a meeting of the Greece school board, which on Tuesday voted 8-0 to appoint Josephine Kehoe acting superintendent. Shown picketing the board's recent actions are district residents Gary Elling, Chris Savino and Linda Gardner. (STAFF PHOTO/CARRIE ANN GRIPPO)

audience to observe the meeting, said aloud, "It's not fun being the laughing stock of Rochester."

Former school board member and Keller-Cogan supporter Karen Hoffman said she's alarmed by the current board's behavior.

"They don't realize what they've done," she said. "They have violated her contract, violated her civil rights. It's bizarre."
