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Plainfield Board of Education Votes to Remove Colleague

By JENNIFER POPPER

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Dorien Hurtt, left, at the Jan. 3 organization meeting *Credits: Jennifer Popper*

PLAINFIELD, NJ - Members of the Plainfield Board of Education voted 6-2 in favor of removing colleague Dorien Hurtt from his position at Tuesday night's business meeting. Carmencita Pile and Dr. Avonia Richardson-Miller voted against it. Board President Richard Wyatt confirmed the action in a statement to TAPinto Plainfield on Wednesday, saying Hurtt missed four meetings in a row, which prompted a hearing.

"Mr. Hurtt received advanced notification regarding the details of his scheduled hearing, in which he acknowledged and confirmed his attendance. However, he did not show up to the hearing/meeting last night."

The district's attendance policies for Board members, posted on the website, indicate that members are expected to attend at least 80% of all regularly scheduled meetings. A board attendance problem occurs if any of the following conditions exist:

RESOLUTION OF THE PLAINFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION

March 20, 2018

WHEREAS, the Plainfield Public Schools Board of Education ("Board") believes that the operation of the Plainfield School District is best supported by the full contribution of all Board members; and

WHEREAS, Board Policy 9010.1, Board Policy 9114, and N.J.S.A. 18A:12-3, provide for the removal of a Board member who has failed to attend three consecutive meetings of the Board without good cause; and

WHEREAS, the Board has recently had cause for concern regarding Board Member Dorien Hurtt's attendance at Board meetings; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the aforementioned Board Policies, Mr. Hurtt was informed of the Board's concerns at least seventy-two (72) hours in advance of this Board meeting; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hurtt has been provided with an opportunity to informally address the remaining Board members regarding his absences and potential removal from the Board; and

WHEREAS, in consideration of Mr. Hurtt's discussion with the Board regarding Mr. Hurtt's absences, the Board has concluded that Mr. Hurtt has violated Board Policy 9010.1, Board Policy 9114, and N.J.S.A. 18A:12-3 by failing to attend three consecutive meetings of the Board without good cause; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Plainfield Public Schools Board of Education that:

1. Pursuant to the authority vested in the Board by Board Policy 9010.1, Board Policy 9114, and N.J.S.A. 18A:12-3, Mr. Dorien Hurtt is hereby removed as a member of the Plainfield Board of Education, effective immediately.
2. The Board hereby authorizes the Board President or his designee to take all actions necessary to initiate a process to begin recruiting a new board member.
3. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

- The member has two consecutive absences for which no notice has been provided. Excused or unexcused shall mean the member did not call ahead to the chief school administrator, the business administrator or the board president before the meeting to indicate they would absent;
- The member has three consecutive absences from scheduled board meetings;
- The member misses one third of the total number of board meetings in a twelve-month period.

Wyatt added, "Mr. Hurtt is very knowledgeable and in the past has proven to be a valuable asset to the board and district. He traveled across the U.S attending NJSBA

conferences where he has gained a wealth of knowledge. However, if that knowledge is not currently translating to success for the board, district, and most importantly the students, then it means nothing. We have policies in place and there are nine members on the board for a reason. Furthermore, we can not address topics like absenteeism in the district if we are not leading by example."

Wyatt concluded his statement, saying, "We will post for the vacancy, hold public interviews, and the board will vote on appointing a new member to finish the term. I thank Mr. Hurtt for his service on the board and wish him much success with his future endeavors."

Attempts by TAPinto Plainfield to reach Hurtt were unsuccessful.