



GRPS Board Irked By Audio Files Attributed To GREA President

By John C. Smith, NewsRadio WOOD 1300 News Team
Monday, February 23, 2009

The Grand Rapids Board of Education changed the subject matter of their Monday afternoon closed door meeting with lawyers after they were given audio files attributed to the Grand Rapids Education Association President. Paul Helder is said to have referred to Superintendent Bernard Taylor (pictured) as the "Stuporintendent" and told MEA peers earlier this month they would strive to bring a strike of District bus drivers next fall. Catherine Mueller, the President of the Grand Rapids public schools board said there are many aspects of those tapes that can't be commented on because negotiations continue. The system and their teachers have not had an active contract since before the 2007-08 school year began. Mueller assessed that at minimum, what the Education Action Group passed along points to bad faith bargaining by the GREA. There are also files attributed to Helder saying they should "take out" 2 more incumbent trustees up for election this spring. Ms. Mueller noted she visits district buildings regularly and there are teachers who are having varied levels of success with students, but she sees the rank and file members as hard working for the sake of students. "The teachers are smarter than their leadership, they know the kids are first, and always will be first in this district", Mueller said. She added an MEA member rightly refused to participate in illegal strikes, prompting Helder's purported comments to persuade the transportation staff to battle the system and administration. Helder told NewsRadio WOOD 1300 his statements were mischaracterized, though as to the idea that they should "take out" some of the GRPS trustees, he stated, "of course we're going to be involved in that election, I would hope people are involved in that election".

Teachers Union President Disputes School Board Charges

By Rod Kackley, NewsRadio WOOD 1300 News Team
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Grand Rapids teachers union president Paul Helder told NewsRadio WOOD 1300 that intentionally or not, the school board president is mischaracterizing a tape supplied by an anti-union group from Muskegon. He also said that she is blowing it up out of proportion.

But, there is an area where he said Catherine Mueller has right. She says the tape proves Helder is working to unseat some school board members, or as she put it "take out the board." Of course, we are, said Helder. "I think it is very clear, not just to us, but to the community, that a number of (school board) policies have come out, that have not been very helpful to children."

For more on this story, [click here](#).