4-2 vote ends Porter's time in Brady school

At a quarter past midnight the contract of Brady superintendent William Porter Jr. was not renewed.

At a special public hearing Monday night, testimony against—and on behalf of Porter—lasted more than four hours.

Following an additional 45-minute closed session that ended at 12:15 a.m., the board of education voted 4-2 not to keep Porter after the 2013-14 school year.

Board members Lisa Diehl, Bryan Franzen, Matt Hatch and Mary Ellen Mann voted against the renewal while Marge Spencer and TJ Walker voted for.

The four patrons that opposed Porter—Bruce Hird, Loren Sylvan, Bridget Gentry and Tammie Taullie—said he was either rude, unhelpful or didn't appreciate their effort.

Tammie Taullie, a food service manager for the past six months, may have been most upset with Porter's professional conduct and what she described as his unappreciative tone.

She said Porter caused stress among her staff which was refuted by Stacy Clark, an assistant school cook, who said Taullie was the one who made the environment stressful.

In one instance, a food delivery truck was running late after public school hours.

Porter said Taullie was reprimanded because she forgot the delivery was coming.

Another occassion Taullie talked about was a day Brady dismissed early for Christmas break.

Taullie was said to be on the clock while she visited a classroom for a gift exchange.

Porter, who was escorted by cook Tammy May, discovered Taullie's location. May said Porter told Taullie to return to the kitchen.

"You can't be in there, you're on the clock," May said Porter told her.

Former Brady Public School principal Hird also took the stand.

Hird explained his reasoning behind his resignation a year ago which had much to do with Porter, he said.

Because of "verbal scolding" during his three years as principal and Porter not trusting him to do his job, Hird said he became "someone else."

"I was clinically depressed," Hird said. "I couldn't cope with what I was being asked to do. Forced to do."

At the end of Hird's employment, both he and Porter agreed their relationship worsened.

Porter said he felt Hird was slacking off in his duties, some of which put students in jeopardy.

Loren Sylvan was also called before the board because his two children, at the time, were not allowed to option into the district.

The irritation grew once Sylvan said he heard a girl being allowed in because she paid tuition.

Sylvan said the option of paying tuition was never offered to him.

"He (Porter) made it clear that he didn't want us here," Sylvan said.

Porter defended himself in saying the board turned down three additional families and that he was "simply following board policy," in Sylvan's case.

When asked by Larry Baumann of Kelly, Scritsmeier & Byrne. P.C., a law firm in North Platte, if Porter was rude and short to Sylvan, Porter said he was not.

"I totally disagree being rude to him," Porter said. "Completely."

Bridget Gentry, of North Platte, had two kids in the school system before they were killed in a car accident.

Gentry claimed to have contacted Porter about being put on a board meeting agenda several times to discuss pictures of her children being posted in the school.

She was never put on the agenda.

She said she was told her pictures would be hung when her kids' graduating class were seniors.

Porter explained that board policy, at the time, did not allow him to hang those pictures.

He noted that looking back he would have put her on the agenda.

"That's one of those things you learn," he said.

He noted that he has been working on improving his attitude and communication.

Porter mentioned his accomplishments during his tenure as superintendent.

Since 2009, he said the school land valuation has increased 38.7% while the school's general fund has grown more than $500,000.

Porter also explained that Brady was in the bottom 5% of schools in Nebraska for student test scores which have improved.

The students are in the top 30% of reading, 49% math and 50% science proficiency standards, he said.

Speaking in Porter's defense were Stacy Clark, Tammy May, Todd Roe, Tammy Palmer Ray Bleed and Dean Connelly who also agreed that Porter wanted what was best for the school district and its students.

Palmer said it would be a shame for the school to lose another individual who cares about what's best for the kids.

"He does more good than bad," Palmer noted.

Bleed backed up Porter's budget statements and said Porter built Brady back up financially.

There are teachers here and in any school that want to run things," Bleed said.

"He runs a straight ship."

Connelly , who was a colleague of Porter at Maxwell in 1983, said Porter has always had the best intentions of the students.

"That's why we're all here, right," Connelly said.

In other business, the board approved a transfer of $3,300 from the general fund to the employee benefit fund and ended Kristi Land's work agreement after Land was hurt in September and has not returned to work.

The board agreed to pay janitor Rachael Dittbenner $8.75 per hour, a 25-cent increase for the remainder of the school year. She replaced Land.

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