
M-T School Board members facing recall urge community to get the facts

Election to be held Nov. 2

By Lisa Curtis
Special to the News Graphic

MEQUON — Two of the four Mequon-Thiensville School Board members who are the target of a recall are speaking out.

Wendy Francour and Chris Schultz also confirmed they will run in the Nov. 2 election in an effort to finish what they started on the board.

The School Board last week certified the required number of signatures needed to hold a special recall election. Organizers of the recall say the four members abdicated their duties by giving in to COVID-19 protocols recommended by MTSD Superintendent Matthew Joynt.

Critical of the mask requirements last school

year, the social distancing and the handful of days the district switched to virtual learning, the critics say the measures have hurt the students academically.

They also insist that the controversial critical race theory is being taught in the district, even though Joynt has unequivocally stated it is not.

Board members Erik Hollander and Akram Khan are also being recalled. Neither answered an email from the News Graphic seeking comment.

Schultz, a former AP chemistry and biology teacher at Homestead High School, likened the recall effort to a lesson she taught her students in which she presented them with an

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Recall

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internet-based petition that sought to ban the substance dihydrogen monoxide. The petition claimed the chemical is a component of acid rain, is found in tumors and, among other things, can kill a person with just two tablespoons. Obviously concerned, the students signed the petition.

In reality, dihydrogen monoxide means “two hydrogen, one oxygen,” or simply, water. Schultz said the students felt tricked. The bogus form shares similarities with the one presented to signers of the recall petition, Schultz said.

“I see some important similarities. From my perspective, community members have been provided with information about MTSD, without necessary context, to compel recall signatures and perhaps votes,” she said. “Please, do not be tricked.”

Francour, too, said the district needs an invested, knowledgeable and involved citizenry for MTSD to be at its best. She countered several claims being made by the recall organizers, including the board turned over voting responsibilities to Joynt.



Francour



Schultz

“The MTSD utilizes a policy governance model to provide the oversight that enables our public education system to successfully achieve the objectives and goals set out in our strategic plan,” she said. “Utilizing this model, MTSD has become, and continues to be, one of the best districts in the state.”

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, for example, recently ranked MTSD No. 2 among public school districts in the state. Additionally, a nationwide education planning and analytics firm found that MTSD students exhibited growth similar to pre-pandemic levels.

“As have most other districts in the nation, MTSD has been impacted by pandemic-related learning challenges and because our student-level data show that unfinished learning has occurred, the district has instituted a board-approved Academic Recovery Plan,”

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— **Chris Schultz**,
Mequon Thiensville
School Board member

Francour said.

She said critical race theory is absolutely not taught in the district — period.

“In our district, diversity, educational equity and inclusion are tools used to address the learning needs and build up all students, lessening none,” Francour said.

She also countered recall organizer claims that the district is not fiscally responsible and noted that MTSD is one of just three of the 421 school districts in the state to maintain the highest possible Moody’s bond rating.

Francour said government meeting rules forbid her from meeting with the other three subjects of the recall, but she said she believes her sentiments represent the group.

“When elected, I joined a

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high-functioning Board of Education, deeply committed to excellence. I am simply a volunteer school board member without a personal agenda, political aspirations, financial backing from nor affiliation with national organizations, attorneys, strategists or lobbyists,” Francour said. “I actively keep student achievement and well-being first, while representing the input and insight of all of our stakeholders.”

Schultz said she doesn’t know what the future holds for her on the board, as the decision lies with the community.

“However, I wish to reinforce the truth that I am as invested and committed to the welfare and achievement of MTSD students as I was during my 17 years teaching at Homestead High School,” she said. “I gave all I had then, and I continue to do so now. Above all, I hope we, as adults and role-models, can find ways to work together because the education of our students must always be more important than our differences.”