

## NEWS

# South Kitsap school board considers censure of member over alleged policy violations

**Jeff Graham** Kitsap Sun

Published 1:43 p.m. PT Apr. 22, 2021 | Updated 3:16 p.m. PT Apr. 22, 2021

"Dysfunctional" is a word two South Kitsap School District directors used during Wednesday's school board meeting to describe its ability to function properly.

Evidence of that dysfunction reared its head two hours into Wednesday's three-and-a-half-hour gathering in which member Jeff Daily brought forward a motion to censure one of the board directors — himself.

"I propose that director Daily be censured for his behavior and remarks," Daily said. "I have no idea what they are, but let's end this right now because that's where you're going. ... we want to embarrass somebody, so do it."

The fireworks began shortly after Wednesday's meeting began as members discussed establishing the agenda. Member Rebecca Diehl proposed a motion to remove an item submitted by member John Berg: discussion regarding alleged offenses and improprieties involving Daily and the possibility of "censuring" or reprimanding Daily.

During the ensuing discussion, Daily addressed Berg directly.

"You've disrespected me in public, you've denied me the right of due process, freedom of speech and confidentiality," Daily said.

Board president Eric Gattenby attempted to cut off Daily, saying his statements weren't germane to the issue.

"It is germane," Daily countered. "I'm talking about the motion here. Do not interrupt. We are going to keep it on here and we are going to solve it tonight, right here. It's going to get solved right here."

Diehl's motion to remove the item from the agenda failed 4-1.

Later, Berg cited the board's Coherent Governance policy (GP-12) which addresses director violations.

"Our policy GP-12 provides the framework, the basis and the authority to censure a director," Berg said.

GP-12 states that "The Board, individually and collectively, is committed to full compliance with the provisions of its own policies. In the event of a director's willful and continuing violation of policy, the Board may seek remedy by the following process: 1. Conversation in a private setting between the director and the Board President or other individual member. 2. Discussion in a private session between the offending director and the Board (as permitted by law). 3. Consider public censure of the offending director of the Board."

Gattenby said Daily had previously been informed of his potential policy violation, first by Gattenby himself, then during a board executive session meeting. Daily disagreed.

"As far as I know, I have never been reprimanded," Daily said, before disclosing information about a Public Disclosure Commission complaint previously discussed by board members while in executive session.

"You are in violation right now by discussing in public by talking about what was in executive session," board member Liz Sebren told Daily.

Berg did not disclose what policy violations Daily might have committed that might lead to possible censuring but proposed a motion to create a pair of two-person committees — Gattenby and Sebren on one, Berg and Diehl on the other — to "investigate accusations and draft recommended action."

Daily responded to Berg by raising the stakes, asking the board to amend Berg's motion and vote on his censure immediately, believing that the outcome has already been decided.

"This is a thinly disguised attempt to publicly embarrass me," Daily claimed.

Saying that the board's censure action was "pre-determined," Daily wasn't sure what a reprimand would accomplish.

"You get your censure, now what?" Daily asked. "How does that change things? What does that fix? What have you done? How has that improved things?"



Daily's motion to censure himself failed 4-1 (Daily voted yes). Berg's motion to investigate possible censure passed 3-2 (Berg, Gattenby and Sebren voted yes; Daily and Diehl voted no).

Toward the end of the meeting, as the board discussed receiving potential Coherent Governance training, Berg said spoke about the board's inability to operate properly.

"The dysfunction on our current board is due more to the personalities on the board than due to the governance model it uses," Berg said. "All the training in the world will do no good if the individual board members do not work together. ... If we can get over our personal differences, we can move ahead with proper governance."

Sebren argued that more training is necessary.

"We have a dysfunctional school board right now," Sebren said. "We need some intensive training to help us get over our personalities and to go back to exactly what the structure is that needs to be guiding us."

Daily told the Kitsap Sun following Wednesday's meeting that he has no intention of stepping down and would like the findings of the censure investigation to be made public.

When asked about the dynamics between board members, Daily admits he's felt like an "outlier" since being elected in November 2019 but that he has no problem fighting for what he believes is best for kids.

"You can't have a school board that (votes) 5-0 all the time," Daily said. "All five people cannot be thinking all the same thing. ... Somebody has to do this kind of work."