

SAD 17 board: No comment on Paris recall petition

SJ [sunjournal.com/2022/11/30/sad-17-board-no-comment-on-paris-recall-petition/](https://www.sunjournal.com/2022/11/30/sad-17-board-no-comment-on-paris-recall-petition/)

By Nicole Carter

November 30, 2022



PARIS — After an emergency meeting in executive session for 90 minutes, Maine School Administrative District 17 voted to make no statement on a petition circulated in Paris to recall two of its school board district's directors who, last month, voted to approve the first reading of proposed ACAA Student Identity Policy.

Last month Paris resident Armand Norton collected close to 700 signatures to force a recall vote of Sarah Otterson and Julia Lester for their support of the proposed policy. At its Nov. 14 meeting Paris select board declined to take action on the petition on the advice of their town attorney, Philip Saucier of Bernstein Shur.

Related

Paris selectmen delay action on recall petitions for MSAD 17 members

But it then reversed course, calling for an emergency meeting Nov. 21 to consider the petition. At that meeting, Saucier maintained his position that accepting the petition and scheduling a recall election would put Paris at legal risk, saying that from his research on the issue, along with guidance from the Maine Municipal Association, the only way to remove a school board member would be if it is authorized by a charter.

"The school is a separate legal entity," Saucier said during the Nov. 21. "It is not part of the town."

"It could certainly be subject to challenge, and a court would ultimately weigh in on this question."

Related

Paris selectmen accept petitions to recall 2 school directors; voters to decide

SAD 17 Board Chair Natalie Andrews of West Paris addressed selectmen during that meeting as well, saying that the Oxford Hills School District has no involvement with its sending towns' affairs. She also confirmed to the Advertiser Democrat the following day that the school district has no standing regarding any community's government affairs.

But by Tuesday, urged by the Maine School Board Association to issue a statement regarding Paris' pending recall election, Andrews called for a special school board of directors meeting to confer with SAD 17's district attorney, Tom Trenholm of Drummond Woodsum in executive session. The school board then voted to not issue any statement on the matter.

I would like the public record to show that I am going to vote against this," said Paris Director Robert Jewell after the executive session concluded. "It's not our business to meddle in the town of Paris' business as a school board. If in fact it's [the recall] illegal, then that is for the courts to decide. This is not a governing body over the town of Paris."

Eleven directors voted against making a statement; seven voted in favor and four were not present during the meeting.

The recall election will be held in January. If Paris residents vote to recall Otterson and Lester, the select board will appoint new directors to finish out their terms.

Related Headlines

[Messages show complexity of gender identity debate](#)

Comments are not available on this story.

[« Previous](#)

[Holiday Events](#)

[Next »](#)

[Oxford Hills vocational students selling refurbished bikes in time for Christmas](#)

© 2023