

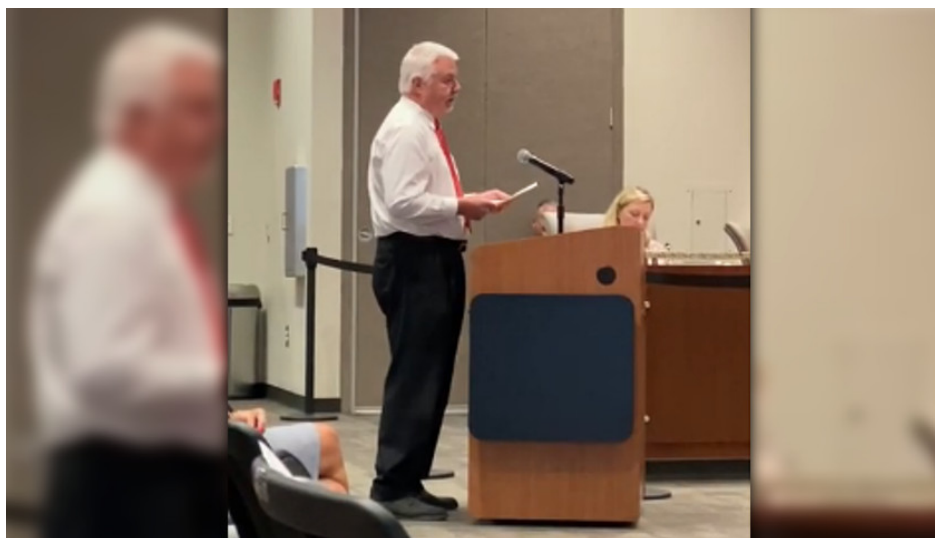


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- ABOUT
- NEWS
- COMMENTARY
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Cherokee County School Board Members Terminate Public Meeting Due to Audience Members' Clapping

August 20, 2021 Chris Butler



More than 250 residents gathered at Thursday's Cherokee County School Board meeting to protest potential COVID-19 mask mandates, but parents' comments irked board members to such an extent that those board members ended the forum prematurely.

Witnesses said those board members then departed the building with police escorts.

Board members' rationale for bringing the meeting to a halt – they said audience members, during the public comment portion, had clapped too much.

Jenny Beth Martin, who attended Thursday's meeting in Canton, said it's not uncommon for audience members to applaud or boo. But she also said they never do so while someone else speaks.

"During this particular meeting, at the very beginning, they said they wouldn't allow any disruption, and then after the first speaker some people clapped," Martin told *The Georgia*

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"They said that is your first warning if you continue to do this. The way that you are acting is like students [who] would have to go to in-school suspension. As if a room full of adults who vote and pay taxes for this are high school students."

Martin said board members called a recess and forced everyone to clear the room.

"They said they would let the time run out, and [they] adjourned the meeting. They did not allow the public to finish speaking. They did not allow the public to stay in for the end of the meeting," Martin said.

"All of the comments so far have been over the mask mandate. We don't have a mandate. We are mask-optional here. We no longer have healthy quarantines. Some people were speaking against that, urging masks, and other people were speaking favorably of what the board has already done. They still shut it down."

Genia Roberson said she founded Cherokee County Informs Parents last year. She said about 1,500 parents joined her group.

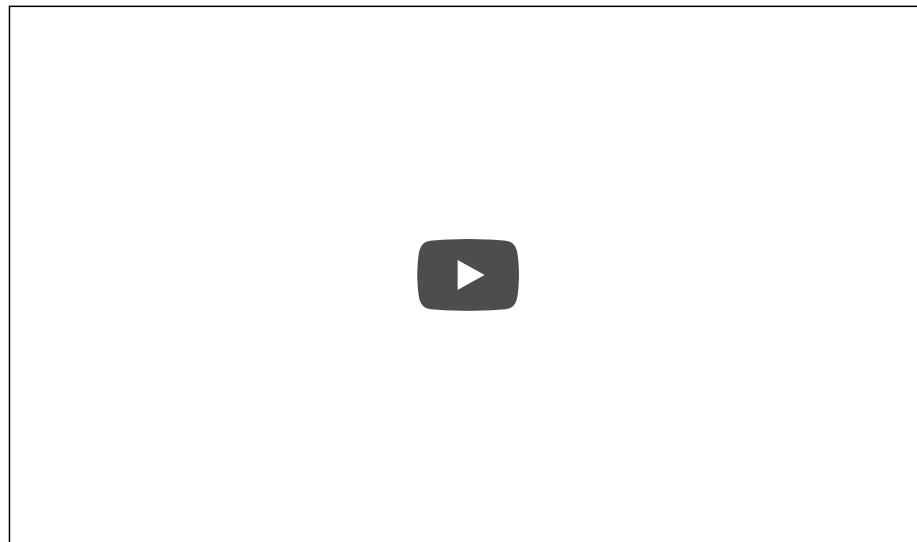
"What happened tonight was just absurd," Roberson said.

"It was over a little bit of clapping. It literally took everybody off guard. It was light clapping. It appears it was all planned to give them an out to dismiss [the meeting]. It was unreal."

Martin told *The Star News* on Thursday that school board members must pay heed to the concerns of parents.

"Elected officials refuse to listen to the people who have elected them. The more that they do that the more anger they are going to cause. About 80 percent of the people who came here tonight agreed with the school board on the way that they have reopened," Martin said.

"And now they are all livid with the school board. This is what is going on around the entire country. These school boards need to remember that when they are dealing with parents that these are adults. They are not dealing with children."



Chris Butler is an investigative journalist at The Tennessee Star. Follow Chris on Facebook. Email tips to chrisbutlerjournalist@gmail.com.



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