

From: Sharon Withrow <sharon.b.withrow@gmail.com>
Sent: 2/10/2021 1:01:41 PM
To: esthermanheimer@avlcouncil.com, sheneikasmith@avlcouncil.com, sandrakilgore@avlcouncil.com, antanettesmosley@avlcouncil.com, Kim Roney <kimroney@avlcouncil.com>, sageturner@avlcouncil.com, gwenwisler@avlcouncil.com
Cc: Brian.Turner@ncleg.gov, Julie.Mayfield@ncleg.gov
Subject: Re: School board recommendations

Thank you, Councilmembers Turner and Roney, for reconsidering culling the list of school board candidates before interviewing them. It is frustrating to see the rest of Asheville City Council dismiss so many educators and parents.

The city of Asheville needs an elected school board. Please stop using the racial achievement gap as an excuse to continue business as usual. Every other city in North Carolina, except for one, has an elected school board. No other city has such a large racial achievement gap. Over two decades, I have seen Asheville's citizens try repeatedly to change the direction of their public schools by working within the current system, only to have a few people on City Council stop them.

In particular, the assertion that an elected board is a power play to get Black voices out of public schools rings especially hollow when the Council refuses to even interview Libby Kyles, an extremely well-qualified Black educator with years of experience in Asheville City Schools and the mother of two ACS students, who is well known for working towards racial equity in Asheville, both professionally and personally.

The current system of an appointed school board is not serving our children or our community well. The people of Asheville deserve a public school system that includes accountability for leadership and a voice for the community.

Regards,
Sharon Withrow
37 Yale St
Asheville, NC 28806

On Tue, Feb 9, 2021 at 2:25 PM Sharon Withrow <sharon.b.withrow@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Asheville City Council,

I am writing to strongly urge you to reconsider the applications of Libby Kyles, Pepi Acebo, and Kate Brewer Fisher to the Asheville City Board of Education.

I know Ms. Kyles from her work at Isaac Dickson, and she is a staunch advocate for students, as well as an expert educator. As ACS parents and volunteers, Mr. Acebo and Ms. Brewer Fisher have worked tirelessly to bring accountability and transparency to Asheville City Schools. Frankly, it is baffling and disheartening that their applications have all been discounted.

I'm not sure you understand what a crisis of trust Asheville City Schools leadership is facing in the community right now. ACS families, the press, and the public have to fight for access to our own Board of Education's public meetings and financial records.

As parents, teachers, and taxpayers, we have no voice in the selection of our public schools' leadership. There is very much a perception that the Central Office chooses its own Board of Education, which leads to distrust and cynicism. The current BoE's opacity does nothing to dispel that cynicism, nor does the fact the three applicants with vocal public support were today discounted by Asheville City Council.

Regards,
Sharon Withrow
37 Yale Street
Asheville, NC 28806