

February 6, 2025

// A special called meeting of the Council of the City of Lynchburg was held on the 6th day of February, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Larry Taylor, President, presiding. The purpose of the meeting was to review and discuss an incident involving a School Board Member. The following Members were present:

Present: Larry Taylor, Curt Diemer, Sterling A. Wilder, Chris Faraldi, Martin Misjuns, Jacqueline

Timmer 6

Absent: Stephanie Reed 1

// In the matter of the School Board, Agenda Item #1, Council held a special meeting to receive and discuss information from School Board Chair Dr. Atul Gupta regarding School Board member Christian DePaul's inappropriate conduct as a School Board member and his subsequent statement regarding his voluntary resignation from the Lynchburg School Board.

School Board Chair Dr. Gupta stated that certain matters were discussed during a closed session, so they would only be discussing publicly available information at this meeting.

School Board Vice Chair Dr. Martin Day presented the results of the School Board's investigation. He stated that on Tuesday, January 21, 2025, after a Disciplinary Committee hearing, Mr. DePaul covered the photograph portrait of former Superintendent Dr. Crystal Edwards with an image of Sloth from the movie *The Goonies* and replaced Dr. Edwards name with Interim Superintendent Dr. Ben Copeland's name in the caption area of the frame. He said that Mr. DePaul was forthcoming about committing the act. He stated that on January 27, 2025, there was a training session in the room. He said that none of the participants noticed the picture, but a staff member observed it and reported it to Dr. Copeland, who then took it down and restored it to the original state. He noted that these facts were undisputed. He stated that the School Board held a closed meeting with legal counsel to discuss the matter on February 4, 2025. He said that Mr. DePaul acknowledged and apologized for his actions in an open meeting and stated that if it were the will of Council, he would resign from the School Board. Mr. DePaul was removed from the Student Discipline Committee and the Facilities and Finance Committee. The School Board has not yet taken a position on whether Mr. DePaul should resign.

Councilmember Wilder motioned, seconded by Councilmember Faraldi, to request Christian DePaul voluntarily resign his position as a member of the School Board.

February 6, 2025

Councilmember Wilder stated that as a former School Board member, a member of City Council, and a life-long resident of the City, he believed that Mr. DePaul had lost respect from the parents and teachers. He said he had received numerous emails requesting Mr. DePaul's resignation. He said that the City kept making national news for the wrong things, and they had to bring civility back to the community, to City Council, and to the School Board.

Councilmember Faraldi expressed concerns about how events had transpired over the past 24 hours. He accepted Mr. DePaul's apology, but Council should hold itself to a higher standard.

City Attorney Matthew Freedman asked if the motion on the table was to adopt the resolution proposed to Council.

Councilmember Wilder said that the motion was to adopt the proposed resolution.

Councilmember Timmer made a substitute motion, seconded by Councilmember Misjuns, to establish a process for deliberations concerning accusations, resignations, censures, and public admonishments before Council.

Councilmember Timmer said that the current process had created a lot of confusion regarding what actions Council could compel. She proposed creating a process to provide the opportunity for fact finding. She submitted a draft procedure for the proposed process.

Councilmember Misjuns said he supported opportunities to slow the process down to allow for fact finding. He said that incorporating the proposed rules would protect the integrity of Council. He said that they needed to move away from the media attention and chaos. He said that the proposed procedures would provide for public input, fact finding, and due process.

Councilmember Wilder said that he did not support the substitute motion. He said that Mr. DePaul had admitted to the facts, so there was no need for further fact finding. He believed that Mr. DePaul should resign irrespective of Mr. DePaul's own desires.

Interim Superintendent Dr. Ben Copeland addressed Council regarding leadership and the importance of judgement. He said that Mr. DePaul's actions were wrong, and a person in a leadership role who displayed bad judgement typically had a short tenure.

Vice Mayor Diemer said that this matter appeared rushed, and it should have been presented to the School Board for a recommendation first. He supported the substitute motion because it would

increase transparency and not rush the process. He said he wanted to review all of the information before making a decision.

Councilmember Misjuns said that they had received an email from Mr. DePaul stating he would not resign, and Dr. Day was a recipient of that email.

Dr. Day stated that Mr. DePaul had offered to resign in statements made at a School Board meeting, recorded and available to the public.

Councilmember Faraldi called a point of order on the substitute motion. He asked for clarification whether the motion was to adopt the proposed rules of procedure. He said that the substitute motion was not included in the published notice of the meeting, so it could not be considered.

Mr. Freedman stated it was his opinion the substitute motion was proper because it was related to the matter. He said the motion was not to adopt the proposed rules of procedure but rather to delay the matter to deliberate on a process to be made part of the rules of procedure.

Mayor Taylor called the question on the substitute motion.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following vote was recorded on the substitute motion:

Ayes: Diemer, Misjuns, Timmer	3
Noes: Taylor, Wilder, Faraldi	3
Absent: Reed	1

Mayor Taylor called the question on the resolution requesting Mr. DePaul's resignation.

With no further discussion from the Council, the following vote was recorded:

Ayes: Taylor, Wilder, Faraldi	3
Noes: Diemer, Misjuns, Timmer	3
Absent: Reed	1

Councilmember Faraldi stated that Councilmember Reed was unable to attend the meeting due to a previously scheduled conflict; he asked the Mayor if Councilmember Reed had communicated her position on the matter. Mayor Taylor stated that Councilmember Reed had communicated her position, and it was in support of requesting Mr. DePaul's resignation.

Mayor Taylor motioned, seconded by Councilmember Misjuns, to adjourn the meeting.

February 6, 2025

With no further discussion from the Council, the following vote was recorded:

Ayes: Taylor, Diemer, Misjuns, Timmer	4
---------------------------------------	---

Noes: Wilder, Faraldi	2
-----------------------	---

Absent: Reed	1
--------------	---

// The meeting adjourned at 5:17 p.m.

Clerk of Council