

Magann Lets Charges Fly Against Four

By SCOTT SHANE
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Ousted Guilford County schools Superintendent Douglas Magann Friday released a strongly worded, detailed statement that gives his version of the events that led to his departure.

The county school board voted 4-3 June 25 to remove him by buying up the fourth year of his contract for \$55,000.

In the 12-page statement and an interview Friday night, Magann blamed his removal on "zealots" on and off the school board who were disturbed by various actions Magann took that threatened "old power blocs" in the county school system.

Magann's statement blasts each of the four school board members who opposed him in his last months as chief executive of the 25,000-student school system and finally voted for his removal:

- Chairwoman Ann Talbert: Magann says Talbert, who replaced Magann ally Evon Dean as chairwoman in April, "has insatiable ambition and she demands to be 'center stage' at all times." Saying that "ambition is a consuming force and does strange things to people," Magann states that Talbert made a "treaty" with Carolyn McGee, Vance Pegram and Betty Smith, in effect agreeing to adopt their anti-administration stance if they supported her for the chair.

- Vance Pegram: Magann says Pegram, a teacher in the Greensboro school system, counseled him when he took the superintendency in 1978 to "beware of the principals" and to "clean house," bringing in people from out of state and with no connections to the University of North Carolina, which Magann says Pegram blamed for preventing him from attaining a doctorate. Magann accuses Pegram of "hypocrisy" in view of Pegram's later, public stands for promotion from within the school system.

- Carolyn McGee: Magann classes McGee and Pegram as board members who "have made careers of issuing 'quotable quotes' designed to 'obscure the truth and inflame certain constituencies.'" Magann says that as a result of the alleged "treaty" that made Talbert chairwoman, "it is clear to most observers that Mrs. McGee is now running the school system."

- Betty Smith: Magann, who previously has said Smith's election last November "cast the die" that led to his ouster, says Smith's campaign was organized and funded by a group of "zealots" who opposed him. "She ran on the theme of 'Save Our Schools.' No one asked: 'From what?' She was elected by 22 percent of the registered voters in the Guilford County school

system," Magann's statement says.

Magann's statement names Smith's fellow Guilford College area residents Graham Pope, Faye Bondurant and Betty Hinson and northeast school district residents Billie Coltrane and Eunice Johnson as among those who "coalesced to re-establish the old power blocs."

In the interview Friday, Magann said the 1979 rezoning of school districts that shifted part of the western district to the northwest district had created opposition to him in the Guilford College area, where Magann himself lives. He said Principal Sam Dockery's transfer from Northeast High School, where he was principal for 17 years, to newly opened Southwest in 1979, alienated Coltrane, Johnson and other northeast residents from the administration. But Magann says the decision to go to Southwest was Dockery's.

When Betty Smith was read parts of Magann's statement Friday night, she said, "That's a totally incorrect statement. I can guarantee you a lot of that isn't true." She added, "The board is doing its best to go on and improve the situation in the county. That's our goal and we'll do our best to achieve it."

(See Magann: B-7, Col. 1)

Some Will Observe

July 4 On Monday

Although today is July 4 and a holiday, many area businesses and offices will be closed Monday as part of the observance.

Closed Monday include:

- Greensboro Coliseum Complex offices.
- Greensboro Public Library's downtown branch.
- City landfill.
- GATE, the transportation service for the elderly and handicapped.
- Banks and savings and loan associations.
- State, city and county offices.
- Automobile license plate agency in Golden Gate Shopping Center.
- Summer school classes at Mendenhall Junior High School. (Classes at Page Senior High School will operate on an abbreviated schedule.)
- Summer school classes at Greensboro College.

"I had hoped that the controversy had already ended," said McGee. "I think the four who voted to release Dr. Magann had tried very hard to end it and I really don't want to comment on (Magann's statement) at all . . . I wish Dr. Magann the very best and that's all I have to say."

Pegram declined comment on the statement, saying, "I will not waste my time responding to anything that Dr. Magann says."

Talbert, reached at the mountain cabin where she is on vacation, said, "Before responding to this I'd like to see the entire 12-page statement."

The 39-year-old ex-superintendent had said nothing in detail of his removal before Friday. His statement repeats in explicit detail charges Magann and his supporters on and off the school board have made frequently in the past.

Magann's statement discusses Dockery, Western Guilford High School Principal Henry Walters and Southwest Elementary School Principal Oakley Mabe, the three principals most often accused of working against the former superintendent. He says Dockery and Walters have made "significant contributions to the system" but contends "they have sometimes used the power of their positions arbitrarily and capriciously."

Magann says Mabe "manages the mechanics of a school in a way that usually benefits children and their teachers." But, the statement says, Mabe "is an ambitious man and was extremely upset with me when he was not appointed assistant superintendent" and hence worked against Magann.

Magann's statement says the continuing controversy in the county school system is partly a result of a national trend in the makeup of school boards.

Fifteen years ago, "boards were populated with middle-aged, successful businessmen who understood large corporations," he says. Now, however, "special-interest candidates" whose "campaigns never end" dominate boards, Magann says.

"Today the conversations turn on personalities and neighborhood politics rather than educational issues," he says. "In short, the experienced statesmen have been replaced by politicians."

Magann's statement also gives his version of a curious incident in May in-

volving Talbert that he calls "the final straw that destroyed the relationship between Ann Talbert and Doug Magann." The incident allegedly occurred at a stormy meeting May 12, when the school board adopted 4-3 a budget that cut Magann's staff by one-third.

Two weeks later, he says, Talbert called "to inform me she had been assaulted" at the end of the meeting by Lois Vaughn, a teacher's aide. Magann contends the alleged assault could not have taken place, because neither he, then-Associate Superintendent Willis McLeod nor the audience in the board room saw it take place when Talbert told him it occurred.

"Nothing even remotely resembling an assault occurred," Magann's statement says. "The entire story was fabricated to garner sympathy for the chairman and to hurt an innocent individual who disagreed with the chairman."

Magann says of the alleged assault, which was reported in the Jamestown News, "The collusion necessary for that story is both revolting and indicative of the current leadership of the county school board. And, in an indirect way, it is a commentary on our times."

Magann said he will leave for a vacation next week and has no firm job plans after he returns.

The school board this week installed T.G. Madison, former Ragsdale High School principal and director of secondary education, as acting superintendent. It is expected to set in motion a search for a new superintendent later this month.

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