



TIMEOUT

Lighting up the stage

A look at area spring shows ▶ 8B

WAUKESHA COUNTY



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SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WAUKESHA

Board receives an earful on 'Rainbowland' controversy

District policy on controversial topics invoked to remove song from spring concert lineup



Mary Catanese/Special to The Freeman

Lucia Schrader and Lucille Walters join their family singing "Rainbowland" in the Waukesha School District building parking lot on Wednesday.



Stacy Keene spoke of "weaponizing" the "Rainbowland" song and said there's porn in the school libraries during the Waukesha School Board meeting on Wednesday.



Monica Whaley spoke in support of the "Rainbowland" song and Heyer Elementary School.



Samuel D'Amico speaks during the meeting.

By Dave Fidlin
Special to The Freeman

WAUKESHA — Dolly Parton and Miley Cyrus indirectly took center stage Wednesday as two dozen residents and advocates went before the Waukesha Board of Education and weighed in on a recent controversial decision to remove a song from an elementary school spring concert.

Heyer Elementary School administration invoked Board Policy 2240 to remove "Rainbowland," originally sung by the two well-known musicians, from a first-grade concert, citing concerns it could be perceived as controversial.

Speakers on both sides of the issue weighed in on the administration's actions, using the public comment portion of the monthly board meeting agenda to sound off on the matter.

Prior to the board meeting, the United Unitarian Universalist congregation also hosted a

"Rainbowland" singalong outside the district office at the Lindholm Building in a show of support for the song and for the teacher who brought attention to its removal from the concert. Melissa Tempel, a first-grade dual language teacher at Heyer Elementary, is currently on leave, according to SDW Superintendent Jim Sebert.

Jay McDivitt was among the speakers who bemoaned the negative publicity Waukesha has received from the latest district-level decision. In his commentary, he wondered aloud how a song about rainbows could equate to politics.

"This has made us a global laughingstock," McDivitt said. "We want to celebrate diversity because kids learn better in their own skin. Our children are not pawns in a political game of chess."

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Heyer teacher behind 'Rainbowland' attention placed on administrative leave

WAUKESHA — The teacher who brought attention to the removal of a song from a spring concert has been placed on administrative leave.

Melissa Tempel, a dual language teacher at Heyer for the first grade, is currently on leave, according to SDW Superintendent Jim Sebert. It is not known why

she is on leave or if it has to do with the controversy over the song. "Rainbowland" by Dolly Parton and Miley Cyrus was on the list of songs for first-graders at Heyer Elementary School to sing during a spring concert.

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Fun Things To Do This Weekend

April Ladies Night Out, 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. today, downtown Delafield. <https://delafield-chamber.com/>

Oconomowoc Public Library Book Sale, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. (library friends only) and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday (\$2 bag sale), 200 W. South St.

Wisconsin Rummage-O-Rama, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Satur-

day and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Waukesha County Expo Center Arena, 1000 Northview Road, Waukesha. \$5 admission. www.wirummageorama.com

The Tap Yard - Brookfield - Pop Up Saturday, noon to 7 p.m. Saturday, Fox Brook Park, 2925 N. Barker Road, Brookfield.

Story Hike — Free Self-Guided Hikes, runs through April 30, Retzer Nature Center, S14-

W28167 Madison St., Town of Genesee. Featuring the children's book "Finding Wild" by Megan Wagner Lloyd. www.WaukeshaCounty.gov/StoryHike

Science Saturday, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Pewaukee Public Library, 210 Main St. Hands-on, self-guided science activities.

Local Author Fair, noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, New Berlin Pub-

lic Library, 15105 Library Lane. www.newberlinlibrary.org

Spring Craft Fair, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Eagles Club, 709 N. Grandview Blvd., Waukesha.

Milw. Miniature Motors Toy Show, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, Waukesha County Expo Center Forum, 1000 Northview Road, Waukesha. \$10 adult admission, free for children 12 and under.

WEATHER



Tomorrow: Partly cloudy
High 76
Low 53

See complete forecast on 8A



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LAKE COUNTRY SALE OF THE YEAR
April 20 - 23



Nearly 200 people gathered outside the Waukesha School District building in support of the "Rainbowland" song on Wednesday.



Tom Talajkowski, ACLU legal observer, watches as school board member Anthony Zenobia speaks to the media.



Mary Catanese/Special to The Freeman

Gigi Jahn and her mother Valery Jahn, right, sing along with a crowd of approximately 200 in the Waukesha School Board building parking lot on Wednesday.

Board

From Page 1A

Other speakers took issue with the Alliance for Education in Waukesha. The grassroots parents group released a statement Monday that took issue with the board policy and the actions of district officials.

The alliance's statement, in part, stated the most recent controversy "is merely a symptom of an ongoing pattern of bias, bullying of students, staff and parents, and failure to appropriately document and respond to incidents of discrimination and harassment."

Parent Stacy Keene said she believed the alliance was at the heart of the controversy.

"If you disagree, you're a homophobe and a racist," Keene said of her perception of the attempts of

SOUND OFF

What do you think?

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the alliance and others taking umbrage with board policies. "Each family has their own values, and a teacher has no right to come between that."

Other speakers took more of a middle ground, but did weigh in on the district's communication efforts, which they said were lacking or confusing.

Laurel Peterson said she believed administrators could have done more to adequately share why "Rainbowland" was omitted from Heyer's concert lineup.

"Heyer deserves your respect, support and encouragement,"

Peterson said.

As is commonplace, the School Board did not directly interact with the speakers throughout the approximately hour-long public comment session. The Board of Education wasn't involved in the decision regarding the song, according to the district.

At the conclusion of Wednesday's meeting, however, board member Anthony Zenobia asked to have an item placed on a future board agenda — how the district communicates with the public.

Zenobia said his agenda request is "in general, but also at a time when a lot of misinformation is spread."

"I think it's risen to the level that we should discuss how we would like to communicate as we go forward," Zenobia said.

School Board President Kelly Piacsek, in response, said: "We can take that into consideration."

Leave

From Page 1A

The Freeman reached out to Tempel for comment but didn't hear back by deadline.

In a letter, Board of Education President Kelly Piacsek and SDW Superintendent Jim Sebert addressed the policy used to decide on the fate of the song.

"This policy [2240], which is shared among hundreds of school districts across the country, states controversial topics include those which might create significant disagreement within the community, which this topic certainly has done," the letter said.

The letter said the Heyer officials made their decision after considering the song's appropriateness for the school setting and subject matter in its lyrics. They also considered the age and maturity of the grade level.

At no time was Sebert or the Board of Education involved in the decision about either song, the letter said, other than to uphold "the routine and reasonable decisions made by the administrators." Nor did they insert themselves into the song selection at the school level or ban, block or bar any pieces of music from the first-grade concert lineup, the letter said.

NPR quits Elon Musk's Twitter over 'government-funded' label

(AP) — National Public Radio is quitting Twitter after the social media platform owned by Elon Musk stamped NPR's account with labels the news organization says are intended to undermine its credibility.

Twitter labeled NPR's main account last week as "state-affiliated media," a term also used to identify media outlets controlled or heavily influenced by authoritarian governments, such as Russia and China. Twitter later changed the label to "government-funded media," but to NPR — which relies on the government for a tiny fraction of its funding — it's still misleading.

NPR said in a statement Wednesday that it "will no longer be active on Twitter because the platform is taking actions that undermine our credibility by falsely implying that we are not editorially independent."

"Defund @NPR," was Musk's tweeted response. His latest tiff with a news organization reflects a gamble for the social media platform he bought last year.

Twitter, more than any of its rivals, has said its users come to it to keep track of current events. That made it an attractive place for news outlets to share their stories and reinforced Twitter's moves to combat the spread of misinformation. But Musk has



AP Photo/Benjamin Fanjoy, File

Elon Musk departs the Phillip Burton Federal Building and United States Court House in San Francisco on Jan. 24, 2023.

long expressed disdain for professional journalists and said he wants to elevate the views and expertise of the "average citizen."

The Public Broadcasting Service said Wednesday it has also stopped tweeting from its main account and that the public TV organization has no plans to resume because "Twitter's simplistic label leaves the inaccurate impression that PBS is wholly funded by the federal government."

Media analysts say growing friction between Twitter and



AP Photo/Charles Dharapak, File

The headquarters for National Public Radio (NPR) stands on North Capitol Street on April 15, 2013, in Washington. NPR is quitting Twitter, according to a statement Wednesday, after the social media platform owned by Elon Musk stamped NPR's account with labels the news organization says undermine its credibility.

news organizations since Musk bought the platform is bad for Twitter, and bad for the public.

Twitter earlier in April removed the verification check mark on the main account of The

New York Times, singling out the newspaper and disparaging its reporting after it said it would not pay Twitter for verification of its institutional accounts.

Twitter used to tag journalists

and other high-profile accounts with blue check marks to verify their identity and distinguish them from impostors. But Musk has derided the marks as an undeserved status symbol and plans to take them away from anyone not buying a premium subscription. Those cost as little as \$8 a month for individuals and a minimum of \$1,000 a month for organizations.

NPR's main account, which joined Twitter in 2007, had not tweeted since April 4. On Wednesday, it sent a series of tweets listing other places to find its journalism.

NPR spokesperson Isabel Lara said its journalists, employees and member stations can decide on their own if they want to keep using the platform. NPR journalists have not been given the "government-funded" label, at least not yet.

NPR does receive U.S. government funding through grants from federal agencies and departments, along with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The company has said it accounts for less than 1% of NPR's annual operating budget. Much of its funding comes from sponsorships and dues from its member stations around the U.S., which in turn get revenue from a range of funders including public institutions, corporate donors and listeners.

FIVE-DAY FORECAST

TONIGHT
Clear
52

TOMORROW
Partly Cloudy
76/53

SATURDAY
Scattered Rain
75/43

SUNDAY
Few Showers
48/34

MONDAY
Rain & Snow Possible
47/33

REGIONAL FORECAST

COMFORT INDEX
9
What the air will feel like tomorrow, based on the temperature, humidity and wind speed.
1 poor; 10 excellent.

WISCONSIN
Superior 55/39
Ashland 66/37
Florence 78/48
Eau Claire 77/55
Wausau 76/53
Green Bay 76/53
Appleton 75/53
Oshkosh 71/50
West Bend 76/53
La Crosse 77/55
Beaver Dam 77/50
Madison 78/52
Waukesha 76/52
Milwaukee 72/53
Rockford 77/52

ILLINOIS
Chicago 72/53
Rockford 77/52

ALMANAC
Statistics for Yesterday
High/Low, Waukesha 79/59
Normal High/Low 83R/58
Normal High/Low 53/37
Last year's high for date 62
Last year's low for date 37
Precipitation, Waukesha 0.00"
Precipitation 0.00"
Precip. month to date 1.11"
Precip. year to date 11.46"
Snowfall Yesterday 0.0"
Snow season to date 51.6"

WIND CHILL TOMORROW
8 a.m. 66
Noon 76
4 p.m. 74
8 p.m. 71

HEATING DEGREE
An index of energy consumption indicating how many degrees the day's mean temperature was below 65 degrees.
Yesterday 0
Month to date 178
Season to date 5215
Normal season to date 5806

Sunset today 7:32 p.m.
Sunrise tomorrow 6:13 a.m.
Moonrise tomorrow 3:44 a.m.
Moonset tomorrow 12:59 p.m.

NATIONAL FORECAST

Friday, Apr. 14, 2023

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN
Tonight: Mostly clear. Lows in the lower 50s. South winds 5 to 10 mph.
Friday: Partly sunny. Highs in the upper 70s. South winds 5 to 15 mph.

MARINE FORECAST
Lake Michigan near shore forecast:
Tonight: S wind around 10 kt. Mostly clear. Waves 1 to 2 ft. Friday: SSE wind 10 to 15 kt. Mostly sunny. Waves 1 to 3 ft.

Lake Michigan water temperature is 67 degrees.

ULTRAVIOLET INDEX FORECAST
The UVI forecast for Friday is 7
UV scale and warnings on possible skin damage: 0-2 low risk, 3-5 moderate risk, 6-7 high risk, 8-10 very high risk, 11-over extreme risk.

TRAVEL ADVISORY FOR TOMORROW

ATLANTA High: 72 Low: 59	CHICAGO High: 72 Low: 53	DALLAS High: 81 Low: 60
DENVER High: 52 Low: 42	LOS ANGELES High: 69 Low: 50	MIAMI High: 84 Low: 74
MINNEAPOLIS High: 79 Low: 61	NEW YORK High: 80 Low: 61	PHOENIX High: 79 Low: 57
SEATTLE High: 55 Low: 39	ST. LOUIS High: 77 Low: 54	WASHINGTON High: 85 Low: 59

COMING UP IN THE FREEMAN



Tips to trim your pet's food bill

In Saturday's Success section