



SEARCH



RICHMOND School Board members spar after closed session

Richmond's Eppes, Gray have testy verbal exchange

Story **Comments**

Print Font Size:

Recommend 7 Share Tweet **G+** 0

Share

Posted: Wednesday, June 19, 2013 12:14 am

BY ZACHARY REID Richmond Times-Dispatch



Tichi Pinkney Eppes and Kimberly B. Gray.

Nearly six months of tension on the Richmond School Board finally spilled over about 12:30 a.m. Tuesday, when two members engaged in a brief exchange after a late, testy closed session during which the board discussed hiring an interim superintendent.

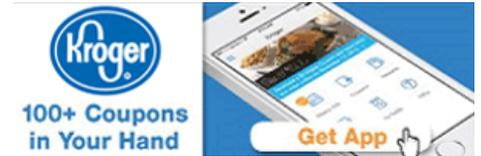
Tichi L. Pinkney Eppes of the 8th District tried fending off a verbal challenge from Kim B. Gray, 2nd District, but the two were quickly separated by a school system security guard.

They left separately with no further incident, but hours later two members sent scathing emails about the incident and demanded quick action from the board chairman.

Shonda M. Harris-Muhammed, 6th District, sent a six-paragraph email at

8:02 a.m., in which she questioned Gray and invoked the wrath of God in helping the board settle its issues.

"When someone violates your space and intiate a arguement forcing another to protect themselves is just outrageous (sic)," the email states.



VIDEOS

More videos:



LATEST NEWS

Henrico supervisors approve plans for radio communications towers needed for regional project

Harris-Muhammed said she was in "some fervant (sic) prayer not just for myself but for all school board members" and asked Chairman Jeff M. Bourne, 3rd District, to take action.

An hour later, Eppes sent her own email, saying she felt threatened.

In telephone interviews Tuesday morning, Gray and Eppes said the incident started in the closed session and teetered on the verge of spinning out of control.

"I will admit, I said I'd whoop her ass," Eppes said. "I thought she showed a lack of integrity and professional respect."

Gray said she was responding to something Eppes said during the closed session.

"I was trying to be respectful and not call her out in front of everyone," Gray said. "I didn't mean to scare her. I had one bag in one arm and two in another. I don't think I was intimidating."

The incident started during the nearly two-hour closed session, which ended about 12:30 a.m., with a discussion about a possible candidate to replace Superintendent Yvonne W. Brandon, who is leaving the city school system June 30. Before the meeting, Eppes vetted her preferred candidate with six of the eight other members. She excluded Gray and Kristen N. Larson of the 4th District.

"She heckled me for the rest of the meeting," said Eppes, who has been in the minority on several highly charged 5-4 votes in which Gray has prevailed. "I finally told her, 'Shut up while I'm speaking.'"

Gray said she took exception to being excluded and admitted to continually asking if Eppes' points applied to the whole board or just the seven members with whom she had conferred.

When the board returned to its open session in City Hall — six-and-a-half hours after its meeting began, and in front of a crowd that had dwindled to two school system security guards and one Times-Dispatch reporter — Gray walked up behind Eppes and said, "Don't you ever tell me to shut up again."

"I felt like I had to say something after the meeting," Gray said. "If I didn't, it would just go on."

The exchange was not audible 10 feet away, but Harris-Muhammed, who was standing next to the two, immediately began calling for Eppes to press charges. She repeated the call in an email sent at 8:02 a.m. to the full board.

Eppes said she, too, hoped Bourne would do something.

"It's a teachable moment," she said.

Bourne said he would talk to Gray, Eppes and anyone else who witnessed the incident before making any decisions about "what, if anything, the board can or will do."

"We can and should disagree on policy issues," he said. "My expectation is that all of our members are able to get past personal differences."

zreid@timesdispatch.com

(804) 775-8179

Whole Foods fires 9 store managers in 3 states, including Va., over bonus manipulation

Chesterfield's county administrator delivers State of the County address

Federal appeals court upholds Va. voter ID law

Department of Corrections says Va. has low recidivism rate

[More LATEST NEWS](#)

SUBMIT YOUR NEWS

We're always interested in hearing about news in our community. Let us know what's going on!

[Submit news](#)

PUBLIC NOTICES



Richmond.com publishes important public notices that may affect the lives of Central Virginians. We fight for the public's right to know about government actions and information.

- Read important **public announcements** that may affect your neighborhood.
- Read notices about upcoming **trustee sales** around the region.
- Read information about local governments **seeking bids** on projects.

..... ADVERTISEMENT

Carreras Jewelers
Capture the Moment

Shop Now

Posted in [City of Richmond News](#), [Education](#) on *Wednesday, June 19, 2013 12:14 am.*

Recommend 7

Share

Tweet

G+

0

Share

Similar Stories

- [Homeless group invite cops to dine with homeless](#)
- [Christmas mother donations as of Dec. 14: \\$102,325.27](#)
- [Byrd Theatre in Carytown to raise ticket prices, install new seats](#)
- [Richmond investment executive pleads guilty in \\$540,000 fraud](#)
- [Virginia Union University gets bequest of \\$300,000](#)

Most Read

- [Suggested route to hit 10 of Richmond's most popular Tacky Light homes](#)
- [Fire at Richmond Yacht Basin marked under control; cause still unclear](#)
- [Glen Allen tacky light house wins \\$50k on ABC's 'Great Christmas Light Fight'](#)
- [Martin's closing four more stores in early February](#)
- [Highland Springs weathers Stone Bridge, claims second straight state title](#)

0 Comments

Sort by **Newest**



Add a comment...

Facebook Comments Plugin

SECTIONS

- Home
- News
- Business
- Entertainment
- Events Calendar
- Food & Drink
- Sports
- Outdoors
- Viewpoints/Opinion
- RTD 101
- All Sections

CLASSIFIEDS

- Today's Print Ads
- Classifieds
- Automotive
- Real Estate
- Employment
- Find Local

SERVICES

- Advertise With Us
- Contact Us
- Business Directory
- Buy Photos
- Email Newsletters
- Subscription Services
- Shop Our Products
- PopMounts & Reprints
- Want to use our content?
- Work With Us

ALL ACCESS

- Sign Up
- Manage Subscription
- E-Edition
- Club RTD
- Change Password
- Report an Issue

CONTACT US

Phone number: 804-649-6000
 Address: 300 E. Franklin St.
 Richmond, VA 23219

SOCIAL

SEARCH

Search in:

- All
- Business
- Classifieds
- Entertainment
- Events Calendar
- Food+Drink
- Life
- News
- Outdoors
- Sports
- Travel
- Viewpoints/Opinion