

Date : 9/27/2017 2:55:46 PM

From : "Shaunda Sandford"

To : "marcieannball@gmail.com"

Cc : "Shaunda Sandford" , "Denise Patterson" , "Martha Geitner" , "Joyce Brown" , "James Lee" , "Patricia Griffin"

Subject : Re: Concerned Community Member

Ms. Ball,

Thank you for taking the time to express your concerns. We value your feedback and we understand how this contributes to strong school communities as well as the success of our students.

As part of its collaboration with Asheville Middle School (â€œAMSâ€), Americans Who Tell the Truth (â€œAWTTâ€), a project that, through portraits and narratives, highlights citizens who address issues of social, environmental and economic fairness, informed AMS that the author of *Hidden Figures*, Margot Lee Shetterly, would be available to speak with the eighth-grade class on September 29, 2017. *Hidden Figures* is the non-fiction, biographical novel and recent motion picture which chronicles the lives of three African American women working at NASA during the space race in the early 1960s.

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In preparation for Ms. Shetterly's visit to AMS, eighth graders attended a screening of *Hidden Figures* and copies of the novel were purchased for eighth graders to read. In addition, using *Hidden Figures* as its primary text, AMS aligned its curriculum with AWTT to implement a Paideia project. The project resulted in students learning about active citizenship and their future selves. Additionally, several students created portraits of local heroes that will be displayed at the YMI Cultural Center in Asheville.

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Late this summer, AWTT notified AMS that Ms. Shetterly had a scheduling conflict and would not be available to speak at AMS on September 29th. As an alternative to Ms. Shetterly, AWTT invited Bree Newsome; she was not invited by Asheville City Schools. Ms. Newsome is a filmmaker, speaker and activist from Charlotte, North Carolina. In July 2015, Ms. Newsome was arrested in Columbia, South Carolina for removing the Confederate battle flag that was on display on the grounds of the South Carolina State House.

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School Board Policy 3535 states that the involvement of any visiting speaker regarding citizenship issues must be "correctly structured" by the school's professional staff. The policy also states that the advocacy of illegal acts by a speaker is not permitted. This Paideia project was specifically based upon Ms. Shetterly's novel and its themes regarding citizenship. The policy strikes a balance between the vital role of our schools in exposing students to differing viewpoints with the need to present those viewpoints within the school curriculum. Given these considerations, the Asheville City Schools declined the offer of Ms. Newsome to participate as an alternative to Ms. Shetterly.

Thank you again for your passion and commitment to Asheville City Schools, and I hope we can all work together to ensure the success of all students.

Best,

Shaunda

On Wed, Sep 27, 2017 at 8:42 AM, <marcieannball@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Ms. Sanford,

First, thank you for all of the work you do on the Board of Education. I am excited and proud that my daughter will attend Asheville City Schools when she is old enough in a few years. I am proud of Asheville City Schools and their commitment to creating spaces where children from all backgrounds have a shot at success.

I have lived in Asheville my entire life and am proud of our city for, in many ways, serving as a place where people can feel more safe and equal than they might in other places.

I have served as a volunteer for Asheville City Schools and was a member of the committee which helped create the Parent Involvement Coordinator position.

I learned that Bree Newsome, who bravely and peacefully removed a Confederate flag from the SC State House in 2015, has been dis-invited from a planned appearance at Asheville Middle School because she has been arrested and the principal feels that she would be an inappropriate guest.

By that standard, if they were alive today, Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks would not be allowed to speak to students at Asheville Middle.

Additionally, State Senator Terry Van Duyn was welcomed to Asheville Middle School after her arrest for her brave act of civil disobedience. There are pictures online of her visiting.

It is essential that those caring for and educating our children understand that without civil disobedience, we would not have achieved the insufficient but crucial progress we have regarding equality for black Americans.

The children of Asheville Middle deserve the chance to hear from this hero and modern day civil rights activist who is coming to our city.

I and many others in our community care deeply about this and ask that Asheville Middle School welcome Bree Newsome to speak to your students at her previously-planned appearance.

Sincerely,
Marcie Ball
[828.989.5096](tel:828.989.5096)

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Shaunda Sandford
Board Chair
Asheville City Schools
cell: 828-273-9445

"We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today."

