

# Clark named to RCSD school board

Former Urban League president is appointee

## Justin Murphy

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William Clark, the retired president of the Urban League of Rochester, will join the Rochester school board for at least the next six weeks as an appointee.

Clark fills the seat that Natalie Sheppard vacated in late August when she took a job with the Monroe County Board of Elections.

The appointment became a drawnout political saga that ultimately fell to School Board President Van White. Three of the six board members quit the process altogether.

White last week was considering naming Walter Larkin, the CEO of UPrep Charter School and the former Edison Tech High School principal.

Clark, 68, worked for the Urban League from 1981 to 2019, serving as president since 1994. He has a background in finance and serves on a slew of nonprofit boards and commissions.

Until this week, Clark sat on the board of trustees for Rochester Prep, the largest charter school network in the Rochester area. He resigned Tuesday in order to take the RCSD board seat.

“I felt it’s better to serve 26,000 as opposed to 2,600 students,” Clark said Wednesday. “I’m anxious to get into my role here, roll up my sleeves ... and look for solutions.”

He did not apply through the board’s process for filling the seat; rather, White contacted him directly. He cited Clark’s finance experience and involvement with the Urban League as key factors.

The drawn-out appointment process, and the eventual selection of someone who didn’t even apply, drew the ire of some initial applicants, including Robert Hoggard.

“The process was a sham,” Hoggard said. “All of the young folks went through the process and then Van picked entirely new folks.”

White said Wednesday that he picked Clark in part to to avoid giving any potential candidate in 2021 an advantage.

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**William Clark 2015 FILE PHOTO**

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**Robert Hoggard**

“Obviously given the challenges of the RCSD and our finances, that skill set was given premium priority in terms of selecting a person to fill the vacancy,” White said.

Because of the timing of Sheppard’s departure, Clark’s appointment lasts only until Dec. 31. The full board will have to decide in January whether to reappoint him for 2021 or replace him with someone new.

Sheppard’s term was to have expired in 2021, meaning the seat will be on the ballot next year for a four-year term. Clark has said he would not run for election in 2021, White said.