

https://www.winchesterstar.com/winchester_star/come-get-me-adkins-rebuffs-calls-to-resign-at-first-school-board-meeting-since-jan/article_6db525eb-c524-52dc-9d09-9e807bace3f1.html

HOT

'Come get me': Adkins rebuffs calls to resign at first School Board meeting since Jan. 6 charges

By MOLLY WILLIAMS The Winchester Star
Mar 21, 2024



Miles Adkins

Star file photo

WINCHESTER — Some deemed him a rioter and a poor role model, urging him to vacate his position as an elected official. Others said he was a veteran, a patriot and a citizen entitled to his due process rights.

Tuesday evening's Frederick County School Board meeting did not, on its surface, present a particularly involved agenda.

But it was the first meeting since Shawnee representative Miles Adkins' February arrest by federal authorities on charges related to the Jan. 6, 2021, breach of the U.S. Capitol, and a long line of community members took to the podium to speak their minds on the topic.

Adkins faces four misdemeanor charges: entering and remaining in a restricted building or ground; disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds; disorderly conduct in a capitol building; and parading, demonstrating, or picketing in a capitol building

His arrest has spurred conversation on both sides of the aisle.

Such was evident at Tuesday's meeting during an extended public comments period. Fourteen people used their three minutes to address the board, and 12 of them spoke about Adkins.

One man, a Marine Corps veteran, said he was offended to see Adkins standing for the Pledge of Allegiance at Tuesday's meeting in light of the Jan. 6 allegations. One woman expressed her support for Adkins, saying he had done great things on the board and that his critics do not represent the majority of Frederick County.

The atmosphere grew tense at times, with community members debating back and forth across the board room. School Board Chairman Edward "Scott" Sturdivant called the meeting back to order.

Some speakers were members of the Mountain Patriots, a local conservative group. The group's founder, Dana Brunn, encouraged fellow members to attend Tuesday's board meeting.

"I firmly believe in our Constitution, the Bill of Rights. I believe that our First Amendment right is the most important right in our country, and it's being censored everywhere we look," Brunn said. "And I'm here to speak on what I feel is constitutional, especially in the people's house. And Mr. Adkins exercised his right, good for you, and for millions of others, for being there to stand for us."

Brunn told Adkins, "Do not step down."

Mountain Patriots member Gene Hawkins said, "As an American citizen, and a Virginian, Mr. Adkins is afforded a guarantee to the same unalienable rights as every other citizen does. Being a public servant does not waive your rights."

Therefore, he said, Adkins is innocent until proven guilty “by a court of law, not the court of public opinion.”

Kathleen Dobbs, a Frederick County Public Schools parent who, at last month’s School Board meeting, pleaded with board members to address the racist bullying she says her son has experienced at James Wood Middle School, revisited the topic on Tuesday, addressing Adkins’ reported use of the n-word in Facebook messages obtained by the FBI.

“I cannot tell you how much hope you gave me when you said, ‘I want you to come back here and give us a report card,’” Dobbs told Adkins. “I was almost in tears when you were saying that.”

Jan. 6, she said, “isn’t my issue.”

“Maybe you thought it was peaceful at first, you just got swept up in it, whatever,” she said. “But you told me that you felt for my son, who is African American. ... And besides [school division Superintendent George] Hummer and the principal, you gave me the most hope that day. And then to find that you use the n-word ... I’m not seeing how you’re going to continue to move the district in the right direction and save my son ...”

Dobbs said she was not yet asking for Adkins’ resignation, but that she wanted him to reflect on what she said and change his behavior.

Some constituents, however, did ask Adkins to resign.

Sonia Marfatia-Goode, an FCPS parent and member of the public school advocacy group Frederick County Strong, was one of them.

“How can we take you seriously, Mr. Adkins?” she said. “... You said before that you’ve changed, you’ll do better. You do not take this role seriously because if you did, you would have stepped down to work on your issues. All of these charges distract from the good that Frederick County Public Schools is doing. All of these headlines make a fool out of all of us.”

Another Frederick County Strong parent, Jodi Yeggy, gave a rundown of what some consider to be a troubled history when it comes to Adkins. He has come under fire in the past for previous arrests and controversial social media posts.

"Mr. Adkins, after your last arrest, I stood before this board and pleaded for you to step down because you are not a good role model for our children or my children," Yeggy said.

She added that she wanted to see other board members hold Adkins accountable, saying, "[Y]our fellow board members should make a motion this evening to strip you of all committee assignments and speak out against your behavior."

Some of Adkins' fellow board members did touch on his charges during the portion of the meeting designated for board member comments.

Daryl Bell (Opequon) emphasized that everyone has Fifth Amendment, due process rights in America.

"We have the system here that everyone gets a fair shake until proven guilty," he said. "Has a board member here been arrested? Yes. Has a board member here been convicted? No. And quite frankly, this body doesn't have the authority to remove anyone from this body. We're elected officials."

He continued: "I say this because we have a lot of very important work to do for our students. ... That's what we should all be focused on, and that's what I'm going to focus on. However, if things come down to a guilty verdict, then that's something that this board does have to take into consideration and does have to discuss. But until that day, this board should be focused primarily on what our job is, which is to work for the schools, and for the students."

Ellen White (Red Bud) said she believes that Adkins' behavior is concerning, and that it's behavior the division would discipline its students or staff for. She also noted that, "We are not removing this individual's due process rights by calling for a resignation."

"It's unfortunate, Miles," she said. "I think that you are a decent person. I think that you have made good decisions, for the most part. There are things that we have disagreed on. But I do believe your pattern of behavior is concerning, and I think I've spoken directly to you about this. And I hope that that changes so that we can show the division that change is possible and good is possible despite past, but I don't know if that's a reality."

Dianna Klein (at-large) said she feels FCPS is at a "precipice" where there are "magnificent things going on," and that there's potential for the current budget to bring many possibilities to fruition.

“It is a shame that we have had to deal with the situation that we’ve had to deal with as far as the distractions pertaining to Mr. Adkins,” Klein said. “And I am also a firm believer in due process. That is the backbone of our country. And Mr. Adkins is dealing with that in his personal life. And in addition to that, he is also serving on this board until a verdict has been delivered. And every decision that I have had the privilege of watching him make has been in the good interest of the students.”

Sturdivant also shared comments which largely focused on due process in Adkins’ case.

“[Y]ou’re innocent until proven guilty,” he said. “I’ve been in corrections now for 36 years. I’ve seen a lot of people that were locked up. I don’t get the opportunity to pass judgement on people. I didn’t when I’m in corrections, and I’m not gonna do it here. I have my opinions, I’ve talked to Mr. Miles at length about what I thought, and that’s where I’m going to leave it.”

As for Adkins, he said there are great things going on in the school division. The board, he said, has made decisions to enhance transparency, educational outcomes and safety, and they’re pushing for responsible and positive growth throughout Frederick County. He did note to Dobbs that he wanted to speak with her personally about her concerns.

In the end, he dug his heels in and, much like he has in the past, rejected calls for his resignation.

“So, yeah,” he said. “If you ask me if I’m going to resign, come get me. You’re going to need a wrecking ball to get me out of here. I’m going to keep fighting for the students, parents and the taxpayers in this county.”

— Contact Molly Williams at mwilliams@winchesterstar.com

Molly Williams