

## OAKLAND COUNTY

# Hazel Park school board accused of illegal scheme to oust superintendent



**Jennifer Pignolet**

The Detroit News

March 24, 2026, 11:00 p.m. ET

A Hazel Park Schools employee filed a lawsuit against her district's school board, alleging they violated Michigan's Open Meetings Act by coming to an agreement behind the scenes for four board members to [vote to end their superintendent's contract](#).

The lawsuit was filed by Superintendent Amy Wilcox's executive assistant, Jamie Buczko. Her attorney, David Jones, said Buczko's was the only name on the suit, but she was backed by a group of administrators who wanted to take action following the board's meeting last week.

Jones said the actions of four board members were "blatant" violations of the Open Meetings Act, which dictates that decisions must be made in public.

On March 16, the board voted 4-3 to authorize attorneys to enter negotiations with Wilcox to buy out her contract. The action did not officially end her contract, so she is still serving as the district's leader, a position she's held for 11 years.

Immediately after the vote, one of the four board members who voted with the majority, Darrin Fox, said he wanted to change his vote. He said Wilcox, who was seated next to him, had leaned over and let him know he would be "personally liable" for the vote.

The day prior, Fox said, he had called Wilcox, and she asked if they had four votes to end her contract. Fox said he told her that they did.

Jones, who previously served as the attorney for the city of Inkster, said Fox's admission shows that the board members had worked behind the scenes to come up with the four votes.

"I don't think I've ever seen an example of such a blatant admission of violating the open meetings act," he said.

The board president, Bev Hinton, who voted with the majority, did not respond to a Tuesday phone call seeking comment.

Fox was not able to change his vote because the board had already put a motion on the floor to adjourn the meeting, and it had received a second. The board could have voted the motion down and then voted to revisit the motion on the buyout negotiations. But the motion to adjourn passed with the support of Fox's vote.

On Monday, the three members who opposed the possible buyout called a meeting to revisit the rest of the agenda that had been skipped the previous week due to the early adjournment. Only those three board members showed up, so the meeting lacked a quorum and could not continue.

Jones said he did not believe Wilcox had any role in the administrators coming together to hire him to fight the board on the Open Meetings violation. He said he had no knowledge of her encouraging her assistant to file the suit.

Wilcox's attorney issued a brief comment by email, also saying Wilcox had no role in it.

"While Dr. Wilcox is aware of the suit, she did not participate in the decision to file it and is not part of it," attorney Heidi Sharp said. "It is our understanding that this is an organization of community members who work and live here who are

concerned about the district and the actions being taken by the Board. Dr. Wilcox remains focused on the students of the district."

Jones said he is seeking a temporary restraining order that would require the board to rescind its vote. If a majority of the board still feels the superintendent's tenure should end, he said, "they have to do it properly."

That includes, he said, an explanation to the community. None was given last week, and there was no debate on the merits of the superintendent's job performance. A records request for her personnel file is pending. The board put Wilcox on paid leave for nearly five months last school year, but she was brought back and given no explanation, Sharp said in a letter to the community at the time.

The suit is filed in Oakland County Circuit Court, and has been assigned to Judge Mary Ellen Brennan. Jones said he was hoping for a quick hearing date for the injunction.

The penalty for violating the Open Meetings Act is a \$500 fine, but can also include attorneys' fees, Jones said. Each board member could also be held personally liable, he said. But even with a low penalty, Jones said those behind the suit felt it was worth it to hold the board accountable.

"The action that they took without any explanation with regard to why it was necessary, what the thought process (was) behind it, and because she's so well respected by so many members of the community, is the reason they felt it was worth pursuing," he said.

*jpignolet@detroitnews.com*

