

Charter chief denies tampering

Suspended Langston charter superintendent blames allegations on disgruntled employees

By Samuel Hardiman
Tulsa World

Rodney Clark, the suspended superintendent of Langston Hughes Academy for Arts and Technology, denied Monday that any grade-tampering took place at the charter school. He attributed the allegations against him and others to pushback from some school employees who didn't agree with the grading system, and he highlighted a recent deposition from Langston Hughes' board president, Carmen Pettie, that he and his attorney, Jim Goodwin, claim show that she doesn't know how grades were entered at the school as the reason the allegations were made.

Clark, his wife and two other staff members have been suspended since April after the allegations of grade-tampering were made. The state Department of Education is investigating the matter.

"As far as I know, the only pushback is from some of those teachers who really want to see some students not do as well. That's the only pushback. There are two different philosophies," Clark said during a news conference Monday.

"All I know is I did my job of making sure that teachers entered the letter grade as opposed to the percentages."

Clark said the school uses a grading system that has teachers enter a letter grade that will then calculate a percentage as opposed to entering a percentage that would then spit out a grade. He said there should've been an internal investigation into the allegations before an external review.

"Had there been some sort of internal investigation, I don't believe we would be sitting here right now," Clark said.

As for the state investigation, "it's my belief that it won't show any grade-tampering if they look at the facts that are in actual place," Clark said.

"As far as I know at this point, the people that have been suspended have not been questioned or asked anything in regards to the investigation, but I'm looking forward to that opportunity."

Bill Hickman, the board's attorney, told the Tulsa World that a report on the grade-tampering allegations is expected from the state Department of Education by the end of the month.

Clark also said he will drop his defamation lawsuit against the board president if she apologizes to him.

After he was suspended,

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Dane Basham of Tulsa and Nick Koebele of Owasso move an exam table in the Medical Supplies Network warehouse. The Tulsa-based organization sends supplies to clinics around the world. JOSEPH RUSHMORE/for the Tulsa World

Providing the basics

Tulsa nonprofit gets supplies to clinics around the world

Medical Supplies Network Inc. started 26 years ago to help a small clinic in the Philippines.

Tulsa Jack Maxwell had been in the Philippines recruiting physical therapists to work in the United States.

"They didn't have the basics needed at the clinic I visited in the Philippines," said Maxwell. "I figured there had to be a way to get basic necessities to them."

So he started collecting, through his friends in Tulsa-area Rotary Clubs, and then shipping supplies to the Philippines.

Medical Supplies Network, a Tulsa-based organization, has grown into a power-

house supplier for needy medical clinics around the world.

The organization, a group that operates in Rotary Clubs throughout this region, sent 12 40-foot sea containers loaded with medical supplies to about 15 clinics around the world last year.

Over the past quarter century it has shipped about 238 sea containers loaded with supplies to 40 countries.

Tulsa physician Dr. Komi Folly will travel to his native Togo later this week. He's donated the cost of two sea containers, about \$30,000, to send free medical supplies to clinics in need. The supplies are gathered from



Crutches and thousands of other medical supplies fill the Medical Supplies Network warehouse. JOSEPH RUSHMORE/for Tulsa World

hospitals — Saint Francis Health System is a major source of supplies — and doctors from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas.

"I know the need in Togo," said Folly. "I know of a case of a woman who died

because the clinic where she was being treated did not have any sanitary gloves. The closest gloves were more than an hour away.

"That's the kind of need we're talking about. It is

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We're getting to the point where our recipients are often from right here in Tulsa, Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas. We want to help people wherever there is a need.

V.J. Lively, of Medical Supplies Network

Competency testing likely for teen charged in slaying

Teen accused of killing BA teacher, raping elderly woman, other crimes

By Samantha Vicent
Tulsa World

A Tulsa 17-year-old will return to court in two weeks to learn whether his defense can use state funds to hire mental health experts ahead of a jury



Green

whether he is legally competent to stand trial for first-degree murder in the Oct. 1 shooting of Shane Anderson,

the reported rape of an elderly woman and a host of other felony counts.

In making the request, Assistant Public Defender Marny Hill told District Judge Kelly Greenough last month that there are concerns that Green's IQ — which an Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs report says is 59 — is too low for him to understand legal proceedings.

Hill has also said it was im-

portant to have experts evaluate Green's competency in light of notice from the Tulsa County District Attorney's Office that it will seek a punishment of life without parole.

Prosecutors who want a life without parole sentence for anyone under 18 at the time of their arrest must announce their intent in writing. A minor can be sentenced to life

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Elderly Tulsan fatally shot during home invasion

By Reece Ristau
Tulsa World

A man in his 80s was shot and killed Monday during a home invasion at a south Tulsa residence.

Officers were called shortly after 4:40 a.m. to a residence in the 7000 block of East 52nd Street after neighbors heard a commotion and called 911, according to Tulsa police homicide Sgt. Dave Walker.

Walker said the suspect gained access to a bedroom where the confrontation took place. The bedroom's window was broken, Walker said, but whether the glass was broken during the intruder's entrance or exit was unclear.

Officers have reason to believe that after the victim was shot, he made his way to the living room, where he collapsed, Walker said. The victim's wife was home but was not injured.

Walker said the assailant used a handgun during the home invasion, and that nothing appeared to be missing as of later Monday morning.

Walker issued a warning to anyone who may have helped the shooter, who is believed to have traveled with other people: "If you were in or around this, you have one chance and one chance only to give us a call. ..."

"The shooter needs to know that he has made a lot of mistakes."

Walker said the crime was unusual because of the time of day it occurred. He said people typically break into houses when they don't believe anyone will be home.

Ginger McCarty, who lives across the street from the affected family, said she wasn't close with the man who was killed, though many neighbors knew him as the "yard man" because he kept his yard immaculate.

"It's a tragedy," McCarty said. "He was a nice man."

The shooting was Tulsa's 18th homicide of 2018.



Homicide detectives investigate at a home in the 7000 block of East 52nd Street where an elderly man was shot and killed in a home invasion. REECE RISTAU/Tulsa World

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Drummond, Hunter trade barbs

Drummond criticizes how law firms were chosen to represent state in suit

By **Randy Krehbiel**
Tulsa World



Drummond **Hunter**

Attorney General Mike Hunter and Tulsa lawyer Gentner Drummond, one of two challengers to Hunter in the June 26 Republican primary, tussled again on Monday, this time over a contract between the state and outside counsel in a lawsuit against opioid manufacturers.

Drummond initiated the nose-poking by suggesting the contract may have been a sweetheart deal for some political insiders; Hunter's side responded by insinuating Drummond might be fronting for the drug companies Hunter and the outside attorneys are suing.

Both sides denied wrongdoing.

The contract in question, signed almost a year ago, brought in former Senate President Pro Tem Glenn Coffee, the firms Whit-

ten Burrage of Oklahoma City and Nix Patterson and Roach, a Texas-based company with an Oklahoma City office, as litigators in a suit brought by Hunter against the drug manufacturers.

In Tulsa and Oklahoma City news conferences Monday, Drummond questioned the terms of the contract and why it was awarded without a bidding process.

He also noted that Coffee, Reggie Whitten and Michael Burrage, and members of Whitten's and Burrage's families, made the maximum contributions to Hunter's election campaign about the time the contract was signed.

"I maxed out and my wife did, and I was proud to do that," said Whitten. "Hunter had courage to file that lawsuit because he knew pharma would come

after him."

Burrage and Whitten have been regular political contributors to candidates of both parties as well as to issues.

A news release by Hunter's campaign called on Drummond to "disclose all of his ties to pharmaceutical companies," and Whitten said in a telephone interview, "Big pharma would celebrate if this guy (Drummond) is elected."

Drummond said in Tulsa on Monday that he supports the lawsuit. His spokesman, Trebor Worthen, said Drummond does not accept contributions from "lobbyists and special interest groups, including pharmaceutical or opioid companies. ... He does not represent any such company in his legal practice, nor does he have any ties to them or interest in them."

The contract with the law firms sets up a sliding contingency fee schedule that tops out at 25 percent of whatever is recovered, plus expenses, and goes down according to how the suit is resolved and the amount of the recovery.

Whitten said a \$1 billion

settlement would result in a fee of about 14 percent, which the defendants could be required to pay in addition to the settlement.

The law firms get nothing if the state loses the case.

The Attorney General's Office said contracts such as the one in question do not have to be bid and that Whitten Burrage's credentials make the law firm well-qualified for the job.

Burrage is a former federal judge, and Whitten has a long track record as a litigator. He also has a foundation dedicated to addiction treatment that is named for his son, Brandon, whose death in 2002 was related to drug and alcohol abuse.

Drummond said some sort of bid process should have been used, whether or not it is required, for a contract that could be worth many of millions of dollars to the law firms involved.

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★ **ELECTION 2018** ★

OKLAHOMA HOUSE DISTRICT 71

Four Republicans, one Democrat seek HD 71 seat

By **Corey Jones**
Tulsa World



Four Republicans and one Democrat are vying to fill the open seat in Tulsa's House District 71, with incumbent Katie Henke choosing not to run for re-election.

The field for the Republican primary June 26 is comprised of Cheryl Baber, 53; Ben Croff, 38; Mark Kosinski, 55; Eric McCray, 37.

Denise Brewer is a Democrat who is running unopposed and will be on the general election ballot in November.

Cheryl Baber

Cheryl Baber said education is the topic most on people's minds as she goes door to door campaigning. She said she comes from a family of teachers and is "really heartened by the funding" teachers received in the most recent Legislative session.

Baber said she is supportive of the funding mechanisms for the pay hikes — taxes on tobacco, motor fuels, and oil and gas gross production — and shouldn't be rolled back in any way.

She said she likes the idea of performance audits of state agencies, which "should probably start with education" to identify administrative cost savings. She also wants to simplify the funding formula to adequately and equitably fund each school.

Baber also said the state must prioritize public safety and criminal justice reform.

She said she is in favor of "fairer sentencing and greater rehabilitation of non-violent criminals," as well as identifying avenues to decrease Oklahoma's incarceration rate.

"If people don't feel safe, nothing else really matters," Baber said.

Ben Croff

Ben Croff said he was motivated to run for office because he has two children in Tulsa Public Schools and he doesn't believe there are enough people in the Legislature who take education seriously.

Croff said there are many areas of improvement for the state. He specifically noted public education and health, saying that bolstering those areas will "cascade and have a downstream affect" to attract businesses and improve quality of life.

"If (students) come from a house where they're not able to get the right types of food or medicine or mental support, then they won't be coming to school to be effective learners," Croff said. "The state seems to be cutting those types of services and that negatively affects students."

Croff also said the Legislature is poor at prioritizing bills. He said lawmakers will focus on legislation that affects "a small fringe of people" rather than tens of thousands.

He said he wants to delve into legislation that affects the most people, rather than focus on niche contingents.

"That's what I do in my current position, I solve mechanical policy and personnel problems," Croff said. "And I have to prioritize the most beneficial to the company."

House District 71 candidates

Name: Cheryl Baber
Age: 53
Residence: Tulsa
About: Attorney

Name: Ben Croff
Age: 38
Residence: Tulsa

About: Manufacturing business manager

Name: Mark Kosinski
Age: 55
Residence: Tulsa
About: Missionary

Name: Eric McCray
Age: 37
Residence: Tulsa
About: Mechanical engineer

Mark Kosinski

Mark Kosinski said he supports no tax hikes to go along with a slimmer government and increased accountability with public dollars.

Kosinski said he feels the Legislature has raised taxes too much and created a government bigger than necessary. He said he would work against that trend.

"The main thing is if I can't do anything else then at least I can vote to prevent that," he said.

Kosinski said he believes lawmakers can find ineffective uses of tax revenue that could be turned into income tax cuts.

He said he disagrees with Gov. Mary Fallin's veto of the "constitutional carry" legislation, which would have removed gun training and licensing requirements to allow Oklahomans to carry firearms as a constitutional right.

"I'm a constitutional conservative," Kosinski said.

Eric McCray

Eric McCray expressed support for teacher pay raises and also wants performance audits done to find administrative waste in Oklahoma's public schools.

McCray said district superintendents have the ability to give teacher pay raises but don't and use the issue as "political football" to gain tax increases. He wants to locate cost savings and redirect those dollars toward teacher salaries.

He also said he wants better transparency from the highest level of state government because the governor's office hasn't been open on education funding.

"We don't even know where the federal education dollars are spent," McCray said.

McCray said he's hearing from a lot of people that the state's drug laws are too harsh. He said the Legislature could maybe focus some of its efforts on the more violent offenders.

"We need to have a strong justice system, but we don't need to have overreach or too strong of a hand," he said.

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Langston: School head denies wrongdoing

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Clark filed a defamation lawsuit against Pettie and two staff members who he claimed made up the allegations. Three board members later sued Pettie, claiming that she misled them regarding the grade-tampering allegations and put the school in danger of closing.

That case has had two hearings on a temporary

restraining order. The hearings have been continued until July.

In late May, the Langston Hughes Academy board met and planned to vote on reinstating the suspended administrators before the school's attorney cautioned against doing so, warning the board about the possibility of a cover-up. That attorney, Bill Hickman, also said the internal strife among the board could re-

sult in the school's being shut down regardless of what the state investigation concluded.

Pettie, when reached by the World, declined to comment before a board meeting Monday evening.

The board took no action again Monday night on reinstating any of the suspended employees and voted against hiring a replacement for Clark.

Earlier in the day, Clark

also reiterated what he has claimed in court filings: The school is in danger of closing without an administrator to attend to student recruitment efforts, teacher retention and other administrative tasks.

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Medical: Group provides clinic supplies

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very basic things, things that are readily available here in the United States. It is medical supplies that often get thrown away here because of an expiration date. Yet it is equipment that is perfectly still good. So this organization collects it.

"I'm excited to go over to Togo this week and help them unpack two shipping containers of supplies. I know how important those supplies will be for people in Togo."

V.J. Lively is the only full-time employee at MSNI, a project of Rotary District 6110, which stretches across four states.

MSNI has two warehouses, with nearly 12,000 square feet of space, just off 11th Street between Yale and Sheridan.

They are stacked full of medical supplies: IVs, wheelchairs, walkers, hospital beds, operating tables and more.

In many cases, those supplies are waiting to find people in need.



Jason Koebele (left), Dr. Gifty Benson, V.J. Lively, Dane Basham, Shannon Beasley and Maddie Barham volunteer at the Medical Supplies Network warehouse on Saturday.
JOSEPH RUSHMORE/for Tulsa World

"We know there are folks in need right here. We've worked with a lot of folks here locally in the last few years," said Lively.

"We're getting to the point where our recipients are often from right here in Tulsa, Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas. We want to help people wherever there is a need."

Maxwell hopes that eventually MSNI will split supplies about 50-50 between local and overseas recipients.

Lively works with a

small army of volunteers, many arranged through Rotary Clubs and some from hospitals and other service organizations, to collect the medical supplies. Many area hospitals and doctors are regular contributors.

The equipment is picked up — sometimes repair work is needed — and then readied to be shipped. Volunteers then load shipping containers, which are paid for by contributions.

So it is a two-part

operation. There is the collection and storage of items. Then there is the funding and packing of a shipment headed overseas.

On a recent weekend, Folly was joined at MSNI by Dr. Gifty Benson, a physician from Ghana who is attempting to put together a shipment of supplies to that country.

Plus, Lorena Garcia, a health-care worker from Venezuela, was working on supplies to be sent there.

"We are working on building a clinic," said Garcia.

"It will take us a couple of years to get the clinic built, but I'm here trying to arrange several pallets of supplies," she said.

"I'm trying to pack as much as I can back to Venezuela. The supplies are very expensive. This is a great organization."

"This place is a blessing for people all over the world," Benson said.

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Green: Defense seeks psychiatric exams

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without parole only after a jury or other fact-finder finds that he or she is, as described in recent opinions from the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals, "irreparably corrupt and permanently incorrigible."

The state could also, for purposes of the trial, retain its own experts to render opinions about Green's competency in response to any conclusions made by defense experts.

Assistant District Attorney Kevin Gray announced during a previous hearing that a doctor from the Oklahoma Forensic Center evaluated Green this spring and determined that he is competent to stand trial.

In a court appearance on Monday,

Greenough said she received requests for funds that will allow the defense to hire a psychiatrist and psychologist on Green's behalf. She said she plans to meet with the defense before deciding whether to approve the request for review by Presiding Judge William Musseman, who will give final approval if he sees fit.

Greenough also announced her wish to have a jury determine the matter before the end of August, which is the beginning of the next schedule for jury trial weeks, and said she did not expect the trial to last longer than 2½ days.

Green, who was present in court on Monday, is charged with nearly two dozen offenses as an adult that include killing Anderson during a

robbery at his south Tulsa home and raping an 81-year-old woman after robbing and abducting her and her husband. He was 16 at the time.

Green also faces charges in a youthful offender case that alleges he held up two restaurants and broke into an east Tulsa residence before initiating a crime spree in October. He had preliminary hearings in November and December for the adult and youthful offender cases, respectively, but has yet to be arraigned in trial court and as a result hasn't received trial dates in either case.

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