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## State pressures WAPS on school discipline

by CHRIS ROGERS

It is hard for students to learn if they are not in the classroom. That is the message then-commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (DHR) Kevin Lindsey stressed with Winona Area Public Schools (WAPS) Superintendent Rich Dahman when Lindsey gave WAPS a choice: face potential charges of discrimination from the DHR or sign a collaboration agreement promising to take steps to improve.

The problem the DHR wants WAPS to improve is a major disparity in the rate of suspensions for students of color versus white students. In the 2017-2018 school year, WAPS suspended students from attending school 234 times, mostly for being disruptive or disorderly. Black students were suspended and sent away eight times more frequently than white students.

Other school districts across Minnesota also had significant racial disparities in student discipline, and last year, the DHR pressured numerous districts into similar collaboration agreements. "I heard from parents and guardians throughout the state that they were concerned about suspension disparity," Lindsey explained. Particularly, they were concerned that students of color are suspended more often or more harshly for similar types of behavior, he explained.

"What kid is not talking to other kids in school? How do you kick him out for this?" one parent of an African-American WAPS student who was suspended asked. "You kick my baby out, you shorten his education," the parent added.

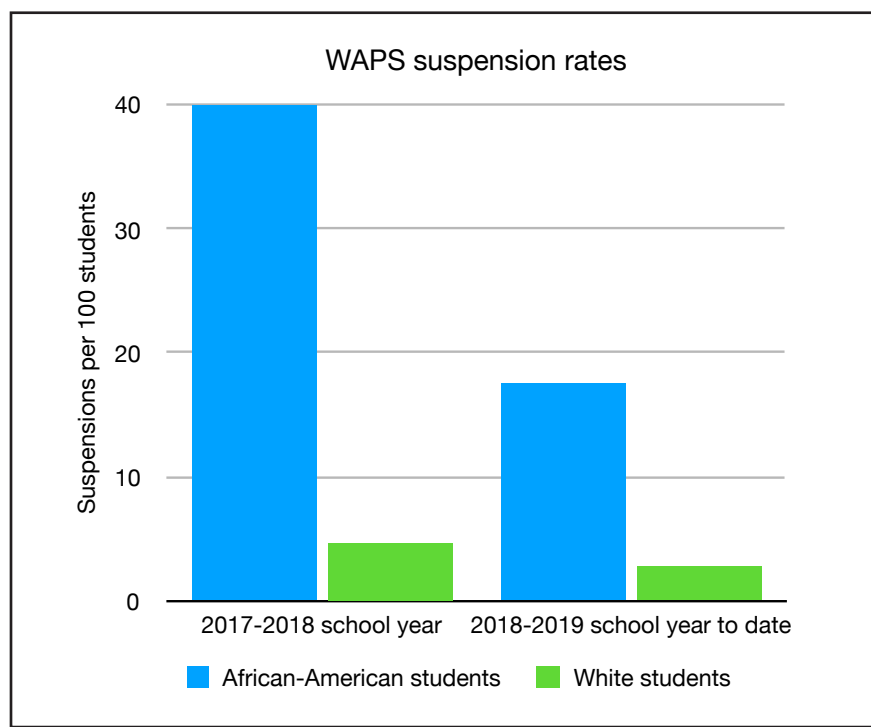
The DHR found that special education students were also being suspended at higher rates than other students.

As Dahman told the School Board

before it approved the agreement last May, "Winona Area Public Schools is one of 43 districts and charters across the state of Minnesota that have been identified as potentially discriminating against minority and disabled students based on suspension data from the 2015-16 school year."

"Studies have proven that higher rates of school suspensions and expulsions among students of color and students with disabilities can have lasting negative impacts in their lives and education," Lindsey stated. "That is why the Minnesota Department of Human Rights takes seriously any allegation or evidence that indicate disciplinary measures are falling disproportionately upon children of color and students with disabilities in our schools. It is our responsibility to fully review such allegations, and work with local school

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## New bands for MWMMF's 10th year



Photo by Nathaniel Nelson

■ Winona dream pop band Sleeping Jesus performs at Ed's (no name) Bar during Mid West Music Fest 2018. They will be returning to the fest again later this year.

by NATHANIEL NELSON

It may only be January, but Mid West Music Fest (MWMMF) is preparing for what may be its biggest

year yet. Last week, the festival announced the full lineup for its 10th anniversary music festival in Winona and La Crosse, Wis., and with it some new changes and surprises.

Recent favorites like The People Brothers Band, McNasty Brass Band and Pho are taking the year off, and instead, the lineup will be filled with new faces and new tunes. Of the 120

bands playing the festival, 74 are newcomers, including many of the headliners.

see **MWMMF** page 5a

## YMCA to hire new, local CEO

by CHRIS ROGERS

After considering a merger with the La Crosse YMCA, the Winona Family YMCA Board has decided to maintain its independence and hire a new CEO to be the face of the Winona Y and usher its new facility to completion.

"In a community of our size, the members look for that and the business community looks for that," Winona YMCA Board member Vicki Decker said. "Who is the face of the Y? Well, it's the CEO, whoever he or she may be."

The Winona Y broke ground on its new, \$14.5-million facility in partnership with Winona Health last fall and will begin construction in earnest this spring. Since the departure of the Winona Y's last CEO in 2017, La Crosse Area Family YMCA CEO Bill Soper has filled in as the interim head of the Winona Y, guiding the major building project, overseeing local staff, and spending around two days a week in Winona.

see **YMCA** page 3a

## New WAPS Board talks leadership, finances

by NATHANIEL NELSON

During an at-times heated meeting on Thursday, the new Winona Area Public Schools (WAPS) Board debated its role as district leaders. By the end of the night, brand-new board member Nancy Denzer was elected board chair, two new members were sworn in, and the board debated whether board members should play a bigger role in finances as the district deals with serious budget problems.

During the board's organizational meeting, senior members Jeanne Nelson, Tina Lehnertz and Steve Schild were passed over for board chair in favor of Denzer. Lehnertz will retain her role as vice chair, while other newcomers Karl Sonneman and Mi-

chael Hanratty will serve as clerk and treasurer, respectively.

One of the biggest topics of the night was discussing board committee assignments, a typically mundane task done at the beginning of every year.

Sonneman argued that board members should be more involved with budgeting and called for the reinstatement of a district finance committee, which he said should include board members that work with administrators earlier in the budgeting process in order to be more involved with district finances. A similar finance committee was dissolved in 2013 after board members complained that it

see **FINANCES** page 4a

## Former Ledebuhr's closed



Photo by Chris Rogers

■ In 2016, Steve Sula (left) and Tye Hemmelman made tripen, a traditional Luxembourg-American blood sausage.

## Ledebuhr hopes to reopen

by CHRIS ROGERS

David and Karen Ledebuhr spent their careers building a business that became a local institution. Local livestock producers and hunters relied on Ledebuhr Meats' Goodview slaughterhouse to process their animals, the company's deli shops in Goodview and Winona were a lunchtime hot spot for locals, and for the area's European immigrant communities, it was one of the last places to buy traditional meats.

David Ledebuhr sold the business to Illinois-based IBR Group and retired in 2017. Then, at the end of last

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