

EXCLUSIVE: Greenfield School Board Member Is A Separate School District Employee
By Mark Belling
WISN-AM

Greenfield School District leaders are seeking an opinion from the Wisconsin Department of Justice regarding the status of a school board member who has a separate job with the district. In all my years covering politics and government in Wisconsin, I have never heard of a board member taking a paycheck as an employee of the same government. Retired, yes. Active, no.

Michelle Haugen is described on the Greenfield Schools website as a clerical employee. But the district's human rights coordinator, in a prepared statement to me, says Haugen works as a playground assistant during the lunch hour. The statement says that while she draws a salary, she does not receive benefits and her position is part-time.

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards, on its website, states school employees may not serve on school boards and cites common law and state ethics rulings as its basis.

The Greenfield district states Haugen has abstained from voting on matters in which she feels she has a conflict of interest. Greenfield officials have said while there have been many cases of spouses of board members working for the district that there are no known cases of the employee himself or herself serving on the board.

If there is anyone to blame here if there is a violation of the law, it is the voters of Greenfield. Haugen was an employee of the district when she ran for office and was elected anyway.

Given that Haugen has stated she will not vote on any proposal dealing with employees, their pay, benefits or working conditions and will "examine her conscience" before voting on anything else, one wonders why she ran for the school board in the first place. This isn't exactly Hooterville. The Greenfield district has nearly 4,000 students.

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