

Akron Beacon Journal

EDUCATION

Rev. Gregory Harrison appointed to open seat on Akron Public Schools board

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The Akron Public Schools board will add a familiar face to its membership.

The board voted 5-0 Tuesday night to appoint the Rev. Gregory Harrison to the open seat on the board. Board member Summer Hall was absent.

The appointment came after a 2½-hour executive session in which the board interviewed five candidates.

Pastor Harrison, as he is well known in the community, is a frequent attendee of board meetings, a sometimes critic of the board and the administration and a longtime advocate for Akron's children.

Harrison has served as the senior pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Akron since 2009. Before that, he was the youth pastor for Bethel Baptist Church. He is a retired Akron police officer, serving 1992 to 2005 as an officer and a detective. He is a 1983 graduate of Garfield High School and 2013 graduate of the University of Akron.

Harrison is a veteran of the U.S. Army, serving from 1983 to 1990. Harrison has served on several boards throughout Akron and Summit County, including the City of Akron Racial Equity Taskforce. He is a frequent speaker at APS meetings.

"I am an experienced advocate and my advocacy work has always been centered around the rights of Akron Public School children and their families," Harrison wrote in his cover letter when he applied for the role on the school board. "This commitment was further strengthened when I advocated for my own son, a graduate of Garfield High School, when he required and was denied the additional services that he was legally entitled to receive."

Harrison could not be reached Wednesday.

Board President Diana Autry said Harrison's longtime service in the community and advocacy made him a strong candidate and that the board was "happy to have him."

"The fact that he's actively engaged, as many of the applicants were, but it's well known that he has been at our board meetings so he's very aware of what our current issues and challenges are, as he's been there to speak to them," Autry said.

She said him being a critic at times is also a benefit. Autry noted she was a critic for years before she was appointed to the board.

"I think it's helpful," she said. "We need that. There's a constructive way to do that, when people go to the next level of actually serving in an elected position or an appointed position."

Autry said the board was "very impressed with all the applicants."

The board also interviewed Gwen Bryant, who was the runner-up in the last election, along with three other candidates. A total of 20 people applied for the open seat, which was vacated when Job Esau Perry resigned to accept a job as a magistrate in Summit County Probate Court.

Harrison will serve the remainder of Perry's term, which ends Dec. 31, 2025. The board will swear him in on Monday.

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