

Court rules against Minnesota School of Science

Written by Harry Colbert, Jr.
Friday, 02 August 2013 14:43



A last minute rally of parents, students and staff was not enough to keep the Minnesota School of Science in its north Minneapolis home.

A Hennepin County judge ruled that the charter school educating nearly 300 students grades kindergarten through seven must vacate its home of two years; the Cityview building located at 3350 4th St. N. The ruling, effective Wednesday, Aug. 7, has the fate of the charter school in limbo as the school must either quickly find another location or come to an agreement with its current landlord, Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS).



MSP earlier attempted to evict the Minnesota School of Science for violating the lease agreement through nonpayment. Officials with the charter school maintained it lived up to its payment agreement and it was the state that did not make payment. According to those with the Minnesota School of Science, the school was only required to pay 10 percent of the total lease and the state was to pick up the remaining 90 percent, but the state never made good on its end of the deal.

"We paid our 10 percent," said Dr. Rosilyn Carroll, Minnesota School of Science board member.

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"The lease says 90 percent was to be paid by the state. The state is the one who hasn't paid. We've paid more than \$70,000 in just building maintenance (in addition to the 10 percent lease)."

Carroll said if the school is forced to close for good she fears for the success of the current charter school students.

"Minneapolis Public Schools is trying to stop us from having our children succeed – especially children who look like me," said Carroll, who is African-American. Eighty-five percent of the students at Minnesota School of Science are African-American. "The children deserve better than what Minneapolis Public Schools is offering."

Arlene Rush, who has three children enrolled at Minnesota School of Science said she too fears for her children's education if they are unable to continue with the charter school.

"I want to keep the school in north Minneapolis and to continue to provide the excellent education my kids are receiving," said Rush, who has a 2nd grader, 1st grader and kindergartener enrolled with Minnesota School of Science. "My fear would be taking them into a new environment where they may not have the same advantages. Here teachers have an honest dedication to providing quality education to the children."

Rush said prior to enrolling her children in Minnesota School of Science one of her sons had a speech impediment and public school officials suggested he be placed in special education classes, but he has flourished at the charter school.

"They told me he needed to be in special education classes, but that's clearly not the case," said Rush. "He's really engaged in reading and I'm amazed Minnesota School of Science was able to do that."

Officials with Minneapolis Public Schools said they had little choice but to evict the charter school from its property.

"As MPS stated to the court, it is unfair to expect Minneapolis students and taxpayers to subsidize the operations of a charter school," said the district in a statement released to Insight News. "No one could reasonably expect to stay in a building for two years without paying the costs of the building's operation. Throughout the proceeding, MPS gave MSS (Minnesota School of Science) every chance to stay in the Cityview building, provided they pay for the amount they owe and agree to a fair rent for the coming year."

Following the ruling, Minnesota School of Science released a statement voicing displeasure with the court decision.

The statement read, "Like the families and students we serve, we are absolutely devastated. In just two years we have transformed the lives of hundreds of north Minneapolis students who, prior to MSS, had little or no viable options for quality education. It is a sad day when the political agendas of adults trump the fundamental right of a child's education. For now, we are

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considering what options might be left to us to continue educating our children and their families. We hold their needs as our top priority.”

District officials said they are committed to working with parents of students in the charter school to find alternative schools within the district. The district had hoped to have programming inside the Cityview location but citing the lengthy litigation, the district will wait until the 2014-15 school year to initiate programming inside the building.