



## EXHIBIT A



# Summit School District superintendent apologizes for comments made about feeling 'drained' by parent committees and 'privileged white people'

Tony Byrd said while he stands by need to discuss issues of privilege and diversity in education, he regrets generalizing groups of parent volunteers

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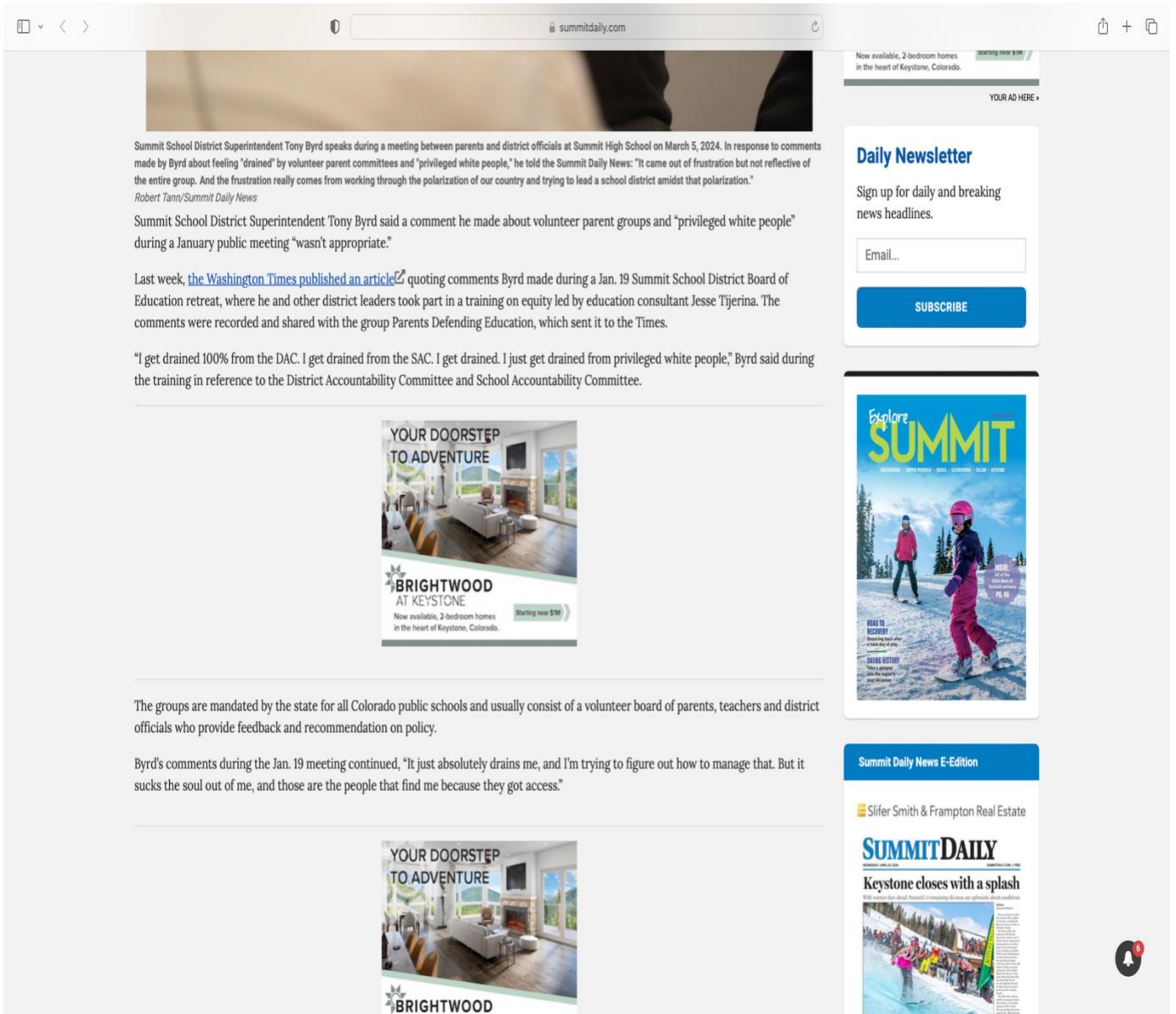
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The groups are mandated by the state for all Colorado public schools and usually consist of a volunteer board of parents, teachers and district officials who provide feedback and recommendation on policy.

Byrd's comments during the Jan. 19 meeting continued, "It just absolutely drains me, and I'm trying to figure out how to manage that. But it sucks the soul out of me, and those are the people that find me because they got access."

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In an interview with the Summit Daily News, Byrd said his comments were “a moment of frustration and tire and fatigue on my part, particularly coming out of what I saw as a very polarized board election in the fall.”

Byrd said organizations like the District Accountability Committee are not always the best equipped to represent the needs of a student body that is roughly 40% Hispanic. He added that in the lead-up to a [contentious board election in November](#), the group's meetings were occupied by nonmembers who came to voice issues about the district that were outside the scope of the committee's work.

“The part I regret is clumping a whole bunch of people together,” Byrd said. “I really do truly appreciate (school and district accountability members) for the kind of volunteer work and support they give to our school district, and I think my comments may not have left that impression for people. For that I'm sorry.”

Byrd's comments at the retreat came less than a month before a District Accountability Committee co-chair [resigned over issues with district leadership](#).

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Sara Stallings, a parent of two, announced during a Feb. 15 board of education meeting that she was leaving the committee after two years of service over what she called “a series of challenges that have upended our committee's ability to function effectively.”

Stallings mentioned difficulty obtaining student assessment data from the district this past fall, less inclusion in the decision making of district policy, inability to communicate directly with board members without the superintendent's oversight and a negative view of committee members from district officials.

Speaking with the Summit Daily, Stallings said she was not aware of Byrd's comments until reading last week's article.

“Unfortunately, it does appear that from Mr. Byrd's comments that he views the parents of this district as adversaries rather than collaborative partners,” Stallings said.

“I think that someone in a leadership position like a superintendent is expected to represent the entire school community, which is made up of many different backgrounds,” Stallings said. “I think that such comments leave segments of our community feeling alienated, and it undermines trust in district leadership.”

Stallings said the committee has been an important mechanism for advancing student interests, from making [detailed recommendations on the district's Unified Improvement Plan](#) to identifying a [state grant now being used for high-impact tutoring](#) in three elementary schools.

But the committee has also been critiqued for its lack of racial diversity, particularly when it comes to Hispanic parents. Before her resignation, Stallings said the group had been making efforts to bring in parents from underrepresented groups and working with a translator to ensure committee materials were in Spanish.

Milena Quiros, a current co-chair now in her second year with the committee, said the group still struggles to be accessible because of its structure. As a Spanish-speaking parent herself, Quiros said she knows what it's like to not always feel part of a community.

“It's hard navigating the system because the system was built for a group of people,” said Quiros, who also works in the district's equity office. “It's hard for parents who come to join the District Accountability Committee without a huge background of knowledge in public education in the United States. It takes a while for a person of color to be able to say something in front of a room full of white people.”

It's why the district [has launched groups like Consejo de Familias Hispanas](#), a more informal gathering for Spanish-speaking parents, which



It's why the district [has launched groups like Consejo de Familias Hispanas](#), a more informal gathering for Spanish-speaking parents, which Byrd called "a new space for people of color to enter."

Byrd said conversations around diversity, equity and privilege remain important in the field of public education, adding, "I do think white privilege is a real thing."


"I think if you have privilege, it doesn't mean you're a bad person. I just think it's important to reflect on the privilege that comes with that and what responsibilities we might have," he said. "What I really want to do moving forward is find the kinds of spaces where we can come together across lines of difference and have really norm-based, reflective conversations."

When it comes to using terms like white privilege, Stallings said, "I think that we shouldn't be scared of the word, but like with anything, you have to approach discussions with care because not everyone has similar understandings."

Ultimately, Stallings wants to see the district and its parent organizations foster a more constructive relationship.


"What happens when parents and school districts can't work together is that the students lose out," she said. "We have to find a way to work together."

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