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LOCAL NEWS

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## Divided Decatur picks next superintendent

### Split along racial lines, school board refuses public input

By Doug Cunningham  
STAFF WRITER

A tense Decatur school board voted 3-2 Thursday night to appoint Iida H. Love, a deputy superintendent in the Kansas City school district, as its next superintendent.

"This is the first time in Decatur I have seen this polarity," lamented Decatur High board director Tim Anderson after the meeting broke up with loud applause that seemed to come primarily from black residents in the packed high school library.

Decatur, which prides itself on being a rich social and racial mix that includes many highly educated professionals, is not used to such emotional displays.

The decision to hire Love came

after members voted with the same 3-2 split, also along racial lines, over two preliminary questions: The board decided not to allow discussion from the crowd, and not to appoint an interim superintendent while continuing the search. Those two proposals came from board member Sara Turriano, and were supported by member Susan Cobbish.

Chairman Edith Hamble said afterward that she quietly feared that a wide-open public debate this late in the game "would further divide our community." She said she had hoped the vote would be unanimous. All five members had privately decided among themselves at an emergency executive session May 11 to vote for Love, after the other candidate withdrew, Hamble said.

But public discontent grew after meetings with the two candidates, intensified when word got out that the other candidate had withdrawn, and became even greater as reports circulated about Love's controversial role in Kansas City's tumultuous school politics.

Turriano said, from her own investigations, she was disturbed to learn that Love supported the idea that "everyone but equal" was a legitimate approach to race in the 1990s. Board member James Eley said that what Decatur already has, promoting options from blacks in the audience.

Board member Don Deard, who has consistently supported Love, told the crowd that board members had already talked in Kansas City with seven colleagues and critics of Love



Iida H. Love, a deputy superintendent from Kansas City, would be the first outsider to take the Decatur position since the system began in 1902.

## Final forum sees options for growth

By Lucy Soto  
STAFF WRITER

About 45 people gathered Thursday in south Cobb County to talk about the future—about how metro Atlanta's collection of counties, government and 3 million people will grow into the next century.

The meeting in Austell was the last of six forums hosted by the Atlanta Regional Commission.

The "Outlining the Vision" series is aimed at helping the 10-county planning agency complete three crucial reports about metro Atlanta's transportation, land development and water supply. Each is required by state or federal law and are supposed to be completed by the end of the year.

"We're not talking about no growth," ARC Director Harry Whit said. "We are not talking about limiting growth. But what we're talking about is maybe it's time to be more choosy, more selective about the kind of growth."

Residents are asked to pick from three models of growth: Continuing the sprawling circle-within-a-circle trends the region has now; expanding along major transportation routes such as railroad lines, roads and MARTA lines; or concentrating growth in towns and urban "nodes."

Don Schreiber, a 47-year-old environmental engineer from Powder Springs, believes the corridor pattern would help keep the city of Atlanta vital and healthy and allow better transportation for suburban residents.

"I think if it could be put into action, this would help settle the sprawl," he said, "and save the land for state like parks instead of buildings over everything."

ARC planners forecast that one million more people will move into the region by 2020, and that metro Atlanta will pave and develop 250,000 acres in that time.

About 350 people attended all of the forums, and the ARC will have another round in the fall.

## Firefighter's lawsuit claims bias in denied promotion

Associated Press

Albany — A white firefighter who says he was passed over for promotion in favor of less-qualified black coworkers has filed a federal lawsuit claiming reverse discrimination.

The suit by David N. Potter, a 37-year-old firefighter with the Albany Fire Department, comes as four other firefighters prepare to go to trial next month in another reverse discrimination suit filed in 1994.

"The white firemen in general feel that they are not being fairly treated," Douglas Black Jr., the attorney

representing the firefighters in both suits, said Thursday. "That's not just the ones I'm representing."

The latest suit says Fire Chief Henry Fields, who is black, promoted two white and two black firefighters to lieutenant in November 1995. Potter was denied promotion, even though he scored higher on evaluation tests and assessments than one of the whites and both blacks, the suit said.

Potter said he sued after grievances he filed were denied.

In December 1994, four other Albany firefighters also claimed

reverse discrimination when they tried to intervene in an affirmative action case involving the city's hiring and promotion process.

As a result, U.S. District Judge Wilber Owens dissolved in May 1995 a 1976 court order setting guidelines to ensure the city hired and promoted blacks in equal proportion to the work force. Owens said the order had served its purpose.

But he also threw out the firefighters' suit after deciding they weren't discriminated against. An appeals court ruled last year that the case

should be heard and a trial has been set for next month.

Fields denied that his department discriminated against the firefighters but declined further comment.

Potter's suit, filed in U.S. District Court last week, claims there's a pattern of white firefighters scoring lower in personal evaluations by Fields, though they scored higher in objective written tests and assessments. Court documents filed by Black say white firefighters were rated an average 10 percent lower than black firefighters in Fields' evaluations.

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