

One under-fire trustee in Manteca resigns

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MANTECA — Alexander Bronson, one of the two Manteca Unified School Board trustees accused of using false addresses to get elected, has resigned.

Superintendent Jason Messer made the announcement at the regularly scheduled school board meeting Tuesday.

Bronson sent his resignation to the San Joaquin County Office of Education over the weekend. The board will need to decide whether to appoint a replacement to finish his term, which runs through 2018, or whether to hold a special election.

He did not attend Tuesday's meeting, the planned agenda of which was postponed for all but public comments because of technical issues.

Bronson and Ashley Drain have been under heavy fire to resign after allegations first emerged they had used false addresses on their candidates' forms for the November election.

The board heard more than two dozen public comments on myriad topics Tuesday. Three people spoke in favor of Drain, saying she had done nothing wrong and one telling the board it was "childish" to worry about such issues as whether a board member lived in the correct area when there are other issues to consider.

The grand jury had investigated Bronson's and Drain's address claims, and the District Attorney's Office subsequently filed charges of fraud against both.

Bronson represented Area 6, which includes parts of central Manteca. Drain represents Area 2, which includes portions of Weston Ranch.

They appeared in San Joaquin County Superior Court on Thursday. Bronson pleaded not guilty to fraud; Drain, who faces additional charges of welfare fraud, had her arraignment continued. At that hearing, a judge ordered both to go this Saturday to the San Joaquin County Jail to have their mugshots taken and be fingerprinted, but they will remain out of custody.

Drain, a 26-year-old mother of three, listed her profession on the November ballot as educator. She owns a downtown Stockton Web design and public relations company. She defeated incumbent Manuel Medeiros, a farmer who had served on the board for 16 years.

According to the District Attorney's Office, Drain used the fake address in completing a voter registration form, an office holder, candidate campaign statement, statement of economic interest, declaration of candidacy and a candidate qualification declaration in August.

Bronson also listed his profession on the ballot as educator. The 22-year-old is accused of declaring a false address on those documents, too, in July 2014.

A former Stockton Youth Advisory Commission member, Bronson defeated incumbent Don Scholl, a parks and trees department manager with the city of Tracy, in November.

Prosecutors said an investigation by the secretary of state found that both Drain and Bronson completed voter registration forms and campaign papers using false addresses.

At one point they listed the same address, but on both papers it was crossed out and other addresses were given.

Their residency reportedly had been questioned leading up to the 2014 election.

Dale Fritchen, a former board member and Stockton City Councilman, was among the first to raise concerns about their residences and has called for their resignations. He has said he would organize a recall campaign otherwise.

The Manteca Bulletin reported last week that there were enough signatures to begin a recall of Drain. The school board rescheduled the meeting to 7 p.m. Thursday.

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