

Chief Hartwell Says He Followed 'Chain of Command' *Firing Upheld, Brother Resigns in Protest*

By Dick Myers
Editor

Northern High School Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) instructor Brandon Hartwell got the news directly from School Superintendent Dr. Daniel Curry. Hartwell, a retired Navy chief petty officer, had reapplied for the job after being notified by Northern High School Principal Stephen Williams that his contract would not be renewed. Hart-

well said Curry told him two people applied and he would not be getting the job.

Hartwell told The County Times in a June 3 interview that he has thus concluded that the outpouring of community support would not succeed and that his next course of action was to hire a lawyer. He is contemplating suit against the school system for his firing.

Support for Hartwell was overwhelming (almost 30 people spoke) at a Calvert County Board of Education May 30 meet-

ing. At that meeting Hartwell's brother George Hartwell, a retired Navy commander and Huntingtown High School NJROTC instructor, spoke on his brother's behalf. Brandon Hartwell said his brother has resigned in protest.

During the meeting Curry stated that Chief Hartwell had not followed the proper appeal procedure, saying, "you would think that people with military experience would understand chain of command."

Hartwell said the comment when he heard it was like a figurative "bullet to the face." He said he in fact did appeal the decision to Principal Williams and then to the school system's Human Resources Department, at which a representative of the Calvert Education Association was also present. He said that appeal exhausted his rights.

Curry's statement was strongly criticized in a letter to the school board by Northern parent Ronald Mattis, whose son is a NJROTC member. "This is a flat out lie to the board, parents and students," Mattis wrote.

Curry told The County Times, "I stand by the statement."

Chief Hartwell said he left his wife and children behind in Virginia Beach to follow in his brother's footsteps as an



Chief Brandon Hartwell in a U.S. Navy photo.

NJROTC instructor in Calvert County. "Family means everything to me," he said about the gravity of moving away from them to take the position.

Hartwell said he would not only be filing suit for himself but also for those left behind at Northern, saying that other faculty in the school have problems with the principal.

He will now be looking for another job. He and his brother continue to be certified NJROTC instructors, so that is one option, although he said he may also seek a job with a government contracting firm.

The day of the interview Chief Hartwell was preparing for his last assignment at Northern. He was directing the color guard at the 2019 graduation at Showplace Arena.

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By Dick Myers

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