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CMS hires New Orleans attorney

BY CAROLYN STEEVES

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CHARLOTTE — Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools recently announced that Regina Bartholomew has been appointed to replace Maurice Green as General Counsel.

Bartholomew is originally from New Orleans, where she held various attorney positions, both public and private, including serving as general counsel to the Orleans Parish School Board from 2004 to 2006.

In their search for a new general counsel, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education advertised the position nationally, with a set deadline for applicants. People across the country responded to the advertisement. Eventually the pool of candidates was narrowed to three finalists.

"I wanted the best person," said Joe White, chairperson of the school board, "I didn't care where they were from."

Bartholomew has lived in Louisiana all of her life, except for a brief time in Dallas, Texas, and Philadelphia. What would prompt a move from a place she's lived for so long?

"All of the basic public institutions have broken down so severely that I did not want to continue to raise my little ones in New Orleans," said Bartholomew, who has two chil-



Bartholomew

dren. She had heard "many great things" about Charlotte, particularly about growth and family life.

After being forwarded an e-mail with the job notice from CMS, "The opportunity had presented itself, and I thought that the qualifications they were looking for fit me pretty squarely," she said.

"Education is in my heart," Bartholomew said, "My parents are both life-long educators in New Orleans."

Bartholomew herself is a graduate of a New Orleans public high school. She attended Southern University, where she received a degree in English and she attended law school at Loyola University. She explained that she believes in public education and wants to be a part of its improvement.

Which is why she is excited to work for the CMS. While everybody has differences in opinion, she explained, "It seems to me that they all care about the most important commodity, and that's the kids."

Bartholomew was working for the New Orleans schools when Hurricane Katrina devastated the city. Because the school board was having major problems prior to the hurricane, a natural disaster was, "a catastrophe on top of a catastrophe," she said.

Her job quickly became "much more hectic." Most of the schools were heavily damaged, some beyond repair. Many

records had been lost. One of the most hectic things, Bartholomew explained, was reenrolling children and trying to get basic services, such as transportation.

"What it became," she said, "Was a fevered effort in which all of the schools that could be chartered were chartered."

Despite all the chaos surrounding New Orleans at that time, Bartholomew said, "It didn't affect me in terms of telling the board what they could do under the law."

"If you've ever lived through a natural disaster that has destroyed nearly 90 percent of your city and you have managed to serve your board," Bartholomew said, "if you can get through that, you can handle anything that comes your way."

Bartholomew is moving to Charlotte later this month and is excited about the coming here. "My city is still pretty much destroyed and not showing much in terms of growth," she said.

She finds Charlotte to be an inviting city and a "great experience for my little ones."

The position of general counsel with CMS has been vacant since last year when Green was promoted to chief operating officer under new Superintendent Peter Gorman.

School board members are glad to have new counsel. "It's best to have somebody who can keep you advised legally," White said. "We look forward to her becoming an integral part of our school system and . . . of our community."

Bartholomew is also glad to provide legal advice to the schools.

"At the end of the day, each and every last one of them cares deeply about kids in terms of education," Bartholomew said. ☺