

From: **Jared Swain** <jswain@comcast.net>

Date: Tue, May 5, 2020 at 2:05 PM

Subject: Special Meeting Public Comment

To: <publiccomments@stoningtonschools.org>

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TO: Alexa Garvey(*Chair*), **Candace Anderson**(*Secretary*), **Craig Esposito**,

Farouk Rajab, **Alisa Morrison**, **Jack Morehouse**, and **Heidi Simmons**

Please read the following comments into the record at the May 5, 2020 Board of Education Meeting.

To the Board of Education members, you seem not to be surprised, that no alleged victim has tried to contact Attorney Chinni whom you hired for the independent investigation. I'm not either because it's ridiculous to expect that young victims should first know to contact Ms. Chinni because it was suggested in The Day, and second, that they would take that initiative when all along it has been made clear to them that they were not to be believed.

First of all, the School Web site stated this emergency hearing to be held Thursday May 7th. Then sometime after 9:00 pm last night it was changed to Tuesday while also stating that comments could be submitted by Wednesday. Then this morning it was changed again to correctly state the right day, and that submissions would be taken until 4pm today. Either the Keystone Cops are in charge or you are deliberately doing what you can to avoid public comment. The website also states that the public should submit their comments via a school email address, or the box outside central office. Do you really think people trust you or Dr. Riley enough to not "lose" the negative comments?

Assuming you haven't lost my email, these are the comments I would be making myself at the lectern if your meeting was held publicly:

1. Why were NONE of the then BOE members made aware of the agreement with Chokas, his leaving, and package deal?
2. Why has no one ever discussed the possibility of suspension of any staff member under suspicion of having held back information regarding this issue to the proper authorities?
3. The students believe were failed in the past by all the current staff members and somehow you imagine any of them are going to feel safe to talk to this investigator, after the letter in the paper states Attorney Chinni has not heard from anyone wanting to give her information and stated which staff members she has already spoken with.

4. Did the high school secretarial staff give her a list of all names of students and their last known contact information that had class with this teacher from his start date, to last date of contact with students?

5. Did Attorney Chinni not read the past articles in The Day paper over who had information regarding this issue that she could have easily found and contacted? As just two examples, there is the retired Groton Police detective, a resident and father of a past student of the high school, and the past staff member who had the integrity to come forward during one of the board of education meetings, and who clearly had a lot to say.

6. Was there any reprimand to the current staff member, whom contacted the past staff member after that meeting? {other than from our police office}

7. Why after EVERY SINGLE ONE OF YOU, stated that all members of staff would be available for interview, did the Union President Freeman send notice to all staff that once contacted via investigator to contact him, and he would send union council to be present? If none of the staff did anything wrong, as they keep saying, then why would any of them need legal counsel during this independent investigation?

8. I phoned this investigator you hired Attorney Chinni, left her THREE voice mail messages to contact me but as of this minute she has not phoned. I was calling her on the grounds that a past student asked me to get a feel of her, before this student phoned her. She stated in her interview she would be available at all times.

9. You are allowing Mr. Riley access to information during this investigation, and you expect folks to trust you? And, you, Madam Chair, when you refer to the investigator you should not be using her first name, that right there tells folks you became too buddy, buddy with her. Take the blinders off will some of you.

Do you really think after just a few of the reasons that I have listed, that you folks are the ones that should be handling this investigation? Many residents including myself think you should have handed it over to the Board of Selectwomen from the very beginning. Stop getting egg on your face and hand this over to an impartial committee, perhaps the Board of Selectwomen, so they can get to the bottom of what truly happened.

Only then can past students can feel safe with speaking to an investigator, as well as in Mrs. Simmons words, "they can feel vindicated at the end." Keep this up and the State Board of Education might walk in one day, and take over. And there will be nothing CABA can do to stop them. Stop listening, and STOP funding CABA with our TAX dollars, they are just a lobbyist group exerting undue influence over you. They are not in any way connected to the STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION. If the State Board of Education does enter, the only member of the Board of Education that would remain would be Mrs. Simmons, because she is new and perhaps others who have disagreed with the decisions of the majority. Maybe it's about time some of you looked at the STATE STATUES... As to your job as Board of

Education members, YOU HAVE CONTROL over the WHOLE School system, stop letting Van Riley run over you all in the steam train he has been on.

Mrs. Tracy Swain Pawcatuck Resident

Attached: State Statutes:

There is Sections 10-218, thru 10-239k, can be found at this link, https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_170.htm this is specific to Board of Education Members. Then this is the main link for all Board of Education's statutes. https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/title_10.htm

Sec. 10-220. Duties of boards of education. (a) Each local or regional board of education shall maintain good public elementary and secondary schools, implement the educational interests of the state, as defined in section 10-4a, and provide such other educational activities as in its judgment will best serve the interests of the school district; provided any board of education may secure such opportunities in another school district in accordance with provisions of the general statutes and shall give all the children of the school district, including children receiving alternative education, as defined in section 10-74j, as nearly equal advantages as may be practicable; shall provide an appropriate learning environment for all its students which includes (1) adequate instructional books, supplies, materials, equipment, staffing, facilities and technology, (2) equitable allocation of resources among its schools, (3) proper maintenance of facilities, and (4) a safe school setting; shall, in accordance with the provisions of subsection (f) of this section, maintain records of allegations, investigations and reports that a child has been abused or neglected by a school employee, as defined in section 53a-65, employed by the local or regional board of education; shall have charge of the schools of its respective school district; shall make a continuing study of the need for school facilities and of a long-term school building program and from time to time make recommendations based on such study to the town; shall adopt and implement an indoor air quality program that provides for ongoing maintenance and facility reviews necessary for the maintenance and improvement of the indoor air quality of its facilities; shall adopt and implement a green cleaning program, pursuant to section 10-231g, that provides for the procurement and use of environmentally preferable cleaning products in school buildings and facilities; on and after July 1, 2021, and every five years thereafter, shall report to the Commissioner of Administrative Services on the condition of its facilities and the action taken to implement its long-term school building program, indoor air quality program and green cleaning program, which report the Commissioner of Administrative Services shall use to prepare a report every five years that said commissioner shall submit in accordance with section 11-4a to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education; shall advise the Commissioner of Administrative Services of the relationship between any individual school building project pursuant to chapter 173 and such long-term school building program; shall have the care, maintenance and operation of buildings, lands, apparatus and other property used for school purposes and at all times shall insure all such buildings and all capital equipment contained therein against loss in an amount not less than eighty per cent of replacement cost; shall determine the number, age and qualifications of the pupils to be admitted into each school; shall develop and implement a written plan for minority educator recruitment for purposes of subdivision (3) of section 10-4a; shall employ and dismiss the teachers of the schools of such district subject to the provisions of sections 10-151 and 10-158a; shall designate the schools which shall be attended by the various children within the school district; shall make such provisions as will enable each child of school age residing in the district to attend some public day school for the period required by law and provide for the transportation of children wherever transportation is reasonable and desirable, and for such purpose may make contracts covering periods of not more than five years; may provide alternative education, in accordance with the provisions of section 10-74j, or place in another suitable educational program a pupil enrolling in school who is nineteen years of age or older and cannot acquire a sufficient number of credits for graduation by age twenty-one; may arrange with the board of education of an adjacent town for the instruction therein of such children as can attend school in such adjacent town more conveniently; shall cause each child five years of age and over and under eighteen years of age who is not a high school graduate and is living in the school district to attend school in accordance with the provisions of section 10-184, and shall perform all acts required of it by the town or necessary to carry into effect the powers and duties imposed by law.

(b) The board of education of each local or regional school district shall, with the participation of parents, students, school administrators, teachers, citizens, local elected officials and any other individuals or groups such board shall deem appropriate, prepare a statement of educational goals for such local or regional school district. The statement of goals shall be consistent with state-wide goals pursuant to subsection (c) of section 10-4. Each local or regional board of education shall annually establish student objectives for the school year which relate directly to the statement of educational goals prepared pursuant to this subsection and which identify specific expectations for students in terms of skills, knowledge and competence.

(c) Annually, each local and regional board of education shall submit to the Commissioner of Education a strategic school profile report for each school and school or program of alternative education, as defined in section 10-74j, under its jurisdiction and for the school district as a whole. The superintendent of each local and regional school district shall present the profile report at the next regularly scheduled public meeting of the board of education after each November first. The profile report shall provide information on measures of (1) student needs, (2) school resources, including technological resources and utilization of such resources and infrastructure, (3) student and school performance, including in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, the number of truants, as defined in section 10-198a, and chronically absent children, as defined in section 10-198c, (4) the number of students enrolled in an adult high school credit diploma program, pursuant to section 10-69, operated by a local or regional board of education or a regional educational service center, (5) equitable allocation of resources among its schools, (6) reduction of racial, ethnic and economic isolation, (7) special education, and (8) school-based arrests, as defined in section 10-233n. For purposes of this subsection, measures of special education include (A) special education identification rates by disability, (B) rates at which special education students are exempted from mastery testing pursuant to section 10-14q, (C) expenditures for special education, including such expenditures as a percentage of total expenditures, (D) achievement data for special education students, (E) rates at which students identified as requiring special education are no longer identified as requiring special education, (F) the availability of supplemental educational services for students lacking basic educational skills, (G) the amount of special education student instructional time with nondisabled peers, (H) the number of students placed out-of-district, and (I) the actions taken by the school district to improve special education programs, as indicated by analyses of the local data provided in subparagraphs (A) to (H), inclusive, of this subdivision. The superintendent shall include in the narrative portion of the report information about parental involvement and any measures the district has taken to improve parental involvement, including, but not limited to, employment of methods to engage parents in the planning and improvement of school programs and methods to increase support to parents working at home with their children on learning activities. For purposes of this subsection, measures of truancy include the type of data that is required to be collected by the Department of Education regarding attendance and unexcused absences in order for the department to comply with federal reporting requirements and the actions taken by the local or regional board of education to reduce truancy in the school district. Such truancy data shall be considered a public record, as defined in section 1-200.

(d) Prior to January 1, 2008, and every five years thereafter, for every school building that is or has been constructed, extended, renovated or replaced on or after January 1, 2003, a local or regional board of education shall provide for a uniform inspection and evaluation program of the indoor air quality within such buildings, such as the Environmental Protection Agency's Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Program. The inspection and evaluation program shall include, but not be limited to, a review, inspection or evaluation of the following: (1) The heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems; (2) radon levels in the air; (3) potential for exposure to microbiological airborne particles, including, but not limited to, fungi, mold and bacteria; (4) chemical compounds of concern to indoor air quality including, but not limited to, volatile organic compounds; (5) the degree of pest infestation, including, but not limited to, insects and rodents; (6) the degree of pesticide usage; (7) the presence of and the plans for removal of any hazardous substances that are contained on the list prepared pursuant to Section 302 of the federal Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act, 42 USC 9601 et seq.; (8) ventilation systems; (9) plumbing, including water distribution systems, drainage systems and fixtures; (10) moisture incursion; (11) the overall cleanliness of the facilities; (12) building structural elements, including, but not limited to, roofing, basements or slabs; (13) the use of space, particularly areas that were designed to be unoccupied; and (14) the provision of indoor air quality maintenance training for building staff. Local and regional boards of education conducting evaluations pursuant to this subsection shall make available for public inspection the results of the inspection and evaluation at a regularly scheduled board of education meeting and on the board's or each individual school's web site.

(e) Each local and regional board of education shall establish a school district curriculum committee. The committee shall recommend, develop, review and approve all curriculum for the local or regional school district.

(f) Each local and regional board of education shall maintain in a central location all records of allegations, investigations and reports that a child has been abused or neglected by a school employee, as defined in section 53a-65, employed by the local or regional board of education, conducted pursuant to sections 17a-101a to 17a-101d, inclusive, and section 17a-103. Such records shall include any reports made to the Department of Children and Families. The Department of Education shall have access to such records.