

Dear Groton students, school district staff, and Groton taxpayers:

After sitting patiently in exile for the past 179 days while my reputation has faced numerous false accusations, I have reached the point to where I have no more hope that the Board of Education will do the right thing in allowing me to address the charges against me. It is now time for me to speak and to begin setting the record straight in the hope that truth, honor, and community will win over self protection and politics.

On Friday, May 4 of this year, I was vaguely informed that someone had made three charges against me. I knew I had done nothing wrong, so my mind was focused on why this was happening. In shock, I found myself before the Board on the next business day being removed from my position, stripped of all my district access to information, and told I was prohibited from speaking to anyone or to come on district grounds. Almost comically I was also told that I was not being charged with anything.

I felt like I was in a third world dictatorship pleading for the opportunity to defend myself. I can remember board member Beverly Washington telling me to keep quiet as I tried to say something. I did plead with them to do the right thing by first verifying the accuracy of the allegations before assuming they were true and throwing the school district and myself into turmoil. They ignored me.

Around five days later, Board attorney Floyd Dugas received information from my main accuser which drew doubt on the validity of the initial allegations. At that point, the Board should have slowed down the process and began a more comprehensive and unbiased process. Instead they chose to head down a path to pressure me to leave in return for not having an investigation report published that would damage my reputation.

There were two problems with this unseemly plan: first, I knew I had not done anything that would constitute just cause for termination under my contract, and second, it is not in my character to fold to blackmail. Over the next few months I asked the Board repeatedly to give me the opportunity to understand what the allegations were against me and to give me a chance to defend myself. The answer was no every time.

The investigation was biased, both in process and in print. After all this wasted time and tax dollars, a verbal summary of the report was given to my attorney. Since the investigator refused to tell me what the allegations were against me when we met, this was the first time I was informed of them. As I suspected, not only were the allegations false, but I had proof that they were false.

At this time, I was persuaded by some close friends to consider negotiating a resolution with the Board, but since the Board was not interested, the investigative report was released. The Board's investigator took all the allegations as fact without investigating truthfulness, published headlines like they were created for the National Enquirer, and developed a document designed to be biased and intimidating.

The only thing that made it more ridiculous was when the Board chose to accept it without asking a single question of the investigator.

Imagine if you or someone you cared for was falsely accused and no one was willing to question the obvious; "why is the Board not allowing the accused to present information?" Probably my greatest disappointment is that some of the people I truly respected on the Board never questioned what was happening. Getting both sides of the story should never be deliberately waived. The Board's actions have not only abused me, but they continue to hurt the district and the community.

Since the Board did not do the right thing, today I will exercise my federal right to have a hearing. Based on my contract, this hearing would normally be before the Board, but since the Board is clearly biased, we are asking for it in front of a neutral person. If the Board is sure they have done a thorough job of investigating, they should have no problem going to an impartial person.

I was hired in December of 2008 to take a school district that statistically was slightly below average and bring it to excellence in academic performance and fiscal sustainability. We were not only on that path we were in the excellent range. Test scores dramatically increased, the increase over my four budget cycles has only been 1.5% in total, and the staff has had stability of employment and excellent resources. The last thing I want is for the school district to regress or become volatile. I have done my best to be respectful and to get the Board of Education to treat me as innocent until proven guilty. In the absence of their willingness to do this I have no choice but to move forward, defend myself, and to stand up for what I think is right. My hope is that others will begin to hold the Board of Education accountable, not in advocating for my innocence, but to advocate for the type of respectful and democratic process that this community should demand from every one of its governmental entities; where a person charged with something serious is given a fair opportunity to defend himself.

Paul Kadri