



TO: Marblehead School Committee
FROM: Dr. John J. Buckey
RE: Executive Session
DATE: July 19, 2023

On Sunday, July 2, 2023 at 3:59 PM I received an email from Sarah Fox, Chair of the Marblehead School Committee with the agenda that she sent to the Town Clerk to post a meeting for Thursday, July 6, 2023. This was the first time that an agenda was posted without any input from the Superintendent's Office. Under the School Committee Communication and Discussion section was an agenda item C. Public Records Request discussion. At the meeting, the Chair was clear that she had been contacted by parent(s) as had School Committee members Alison Taylor and Jennifer Schaeffner regarding public records requests around a bullying investigation being on the previous School Committee agenda. None of the members reached out to me to discuss these concerns. To date, I do not know what they are.

As no one had shared any additional specifics regarding the executive session with me, I was left to assume that since there was a bullying investigation as part of one of the public records requests, they were attempting to make the case that I knew about bullying and did not act. That is categorically false.

Chair Fox was very clear that she had been advised by legal counsel on how to discuss this agenda item. She was deliberate in her wording around holding an executive session to discuss a records request regarding a former coach and an investigation that had been done. She said there was an interest in knowing who knew what, when they knew it, when they acted and if there had been any lag time between knowing and acting. She discussed from the attorney if there be any policy implications around the discussion. The School Committee spent time trying to schedule a meeting as soon as possible, based on Secretary Taylor's urging.

Here is a clip of the conversation about the Executive session. It begins at 1:43.55

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8Y0Zu72yZI&t=6642s>

The next day, Chair Fox went to Central Office to sign some bills. She told the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operation, Michelle Cresta, that John and High School Principal, Dan Bauer, "are really going to look bad" or words to that effect, after this upcoming Executive Session. This made Michelle uncomfortable and she came to my office immediately after to inform me of the Chair's comments. Sarah had stopped in my office on her way out to

discuss some things from the previous night's meeting. She did not mention the Executive Session to me.

After the Town Election on June 20, Chair Fox had a telephone conversation with Michelle on the evening of June 22 around 7:00 PM where she discussed new Committee member Jenn Schaeffner "getting her way (about Freshman sports being reinstated) and that John should find a way to do it because it's his job that is on the line," or words to that effect. This also made Michelle uncomfortable.

The facts are that a father requested to meet with me in late July 2022 about the high school girls' soccer program. My Administrative Assistant scheduled the meeting for August 1st at 3:00. I met with his wife and him and High School Principal Bauer in the small conference room in my office at Widger Road. The discussion centered around frustrations with playing time, roster placements, communication with the coach and Athletic Director and allegations of favoritism. At no time was there any concerns of bullying or a hostile environment raised. Those words were not used and the discussion did not raise any red flags around bullying, hazing, or harassment. They did not ask about filing a formal complaint or pursuing these issues. As a result of the conversation, we developed a plan for the Principal and AD to facilitate a meeting with the Coach, the parents and the student-athlete, their daughter. Principal Bauer's recollection of the meeting aligns with mine and he has put that in writing. According to Principal Bauer that meeting was held on August 15, 2023. I did not hear anything more from the family after that meeting.

Around October 22, 2023, Student Services Director, Paula Donnelly, informed me that a formal bullying complaint about the girls' soccer coach had been anonymously filed. The complaint was dated October 21, 2023. She said she was hiring an independent investigator to pursue the complaint. I was not contacted about the investigation. I was not interviewed.

I asked Director of Technology Stephen Kwiatek to do an email search of any correspondence with me regarding the girls' soccer coach and bullying and there were no emails prior to the formal complaint being filed.

So, as to what I knew and when I knew it, I became aware of a bullying complaint at the end of October, 2022. As our policies dictate, the investigation was initiated by the Student Services Director, Paula Donnelly. For reasons of ensuring the integrity of the investigation I did not contact the investigator, nor was I instructed to do so. In fact, it would have been inappropriate for me to do so, as our policies, the law and good sense do not permit me to thumb the scales one way or another.

On Tuesday, July 18, 2023 I received an email from Chair Fox addressed to members of the School Committee and my Administrative Assistant, Lisa Dimier, directing her to post an Executive Session for Friday, July 21 at 2:00. I have been provided no additional information on the Executive Session other than it now being called under exemption two, which is different from what Chair Fox announced in the Public School Committee meeting on Thursday, July 6

where she state the attorney had advised her to cite exemption one. The change has not been discussed with me.

I called Chair Fox on Friday, July 14 to connect after the MASS Executive Institute. She did not return my call. She has not communicated any details or information with me since Friday, July 7, 2023.