

November 12, 2012

Deborah Sovinee
68 Palisades Cir
Stoughton, MA 02072

Re: Your Letter

Dear Deborah Sovinee:

On Sunday, October 21, 2012, I sent you an email stating: "Late Friday afternoon, I found out that my kid brother is scheduled for a major emergency surgery on Tuesday. Since I am the only family he has, I came to Turkey to be with him. I regret that I will miss the School Committee meeting this Tuesday, and potentially the Selectmen meeting next Tuesday. Please cover for me."

Much to my surprise, you responded by sending me a nasty letter containing wild accusations, errors and mistruths. I understand you also stated some of your wild accusations during the televised school committee meeting.

In your letter, you first make the following allegation:

Early on in the negotiations with the Stoughton Teacher's Association, on the teacher evaluation tools, the District negotiation team (myself, you, Mr. Ford, Dr. Rizzi, and our attorney, Gini Tate) agreed on a point of strategy while meeting privately in the Superintendent's office. When we returned to meet with the union negotiating team you revealed what we had just privately agreed on.

I do not understand what you are talking about. Since you start with the phrase "early on in the negotiations," it sounds like you are talking about some distant past. I remember one instance you revealed our strategy to the teachers by mistake. I wonder if you are confused about that incident? Since your allegation conveniently lacks the important details such as when and what was revealed, I am unable to respond to it. I am sure you would have written to me about it earlier, if your allegation had any merit to it.

Your second allegation is the following:

The most serious violation occurred during a union bargaining session on Monday, October 15. The District negotiating team was sequestered in the superintendent's office. You grabbed a letter from a pile of papers in the superintendent's office to read. This was after you had been told explicitly by the Superintendent and by myself that the letter, which you had demanded to see, was a draft not meant to be shared. Dr. Rizzi indicated that, when the letter was finished, she would make it available to the entire School Committee. You absolutely cannot start picking papers up and reading them. This is a violation of acceptable social and professional behavior and the access we are allowed to the Superintendent's office during the course of School Committee business. As public servants, we are often privy to information that must be kept private, and you, Dr. Ural, have violated that privilege.

Even though you got the date wrong, I remember this incident well because I was extremely surprised with your, Rizzi's, Ford's and Tate's misconduct. First of all, you failed to inform me that there is a negotiation meeting that night. I found out about it from a courtesy email sent by the STA to the negotiation team. When we were caucusing, I observed you, Rizzi, Ford, and Tate looking at a document. I heard Ford referring to it as an "atom bomb" to be dropped on the

teachers after they agree to the new evaluation. I further understood that, that document was written by Rizzi as a response to the recent STA complaint to the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education alleging that Superintendent's representation was not truthful.

As you know, the law requires us to negotiate in good faith. In this case, your misconduct, along with that of Rizzi, Ford and Tate was not only unethical, but was illegal as well.

Your third and final allegation states:

Your letter to the union president making unsupported allegations regarding your request for a document was inappropriate. On October 12, you requested a document and received a reply from the Superintendent's office through Mary Shea that both the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent were in meetings all day. Mary Shea indicated that one of them needed to get her the document, but that she would call you the following day when copies were ready. You then took it upon yourself to contact the President of the STA and not only ask for a copy of the document, but also indicated that the superintendent was either unable or refusing to give you a copy of the document. Criticizing the Superintendent of the School District to the teacher's union is inappropriate. Your role as School Committee member and, in particular, the privilege of being part of a negotiating team, requires that you support the Superintendent and School Committee in all matters that conform to Committee policy. This issue involved Committee negotiations. The MASC handbook for School Committee members states: "Act only as a body as prescribed by law and not as individual members."

When I received a copy of the complaint STA sent to the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education alleging that Superintendent's representation was not truthful, I wanted to check it for myself. I asked Rizzi for a copy of her submittal. She did not respond. Instead, Mrs. Shea sent me an email saying that she will call me when a copy is ready. I waited for 24 hours, and then I requested the same from the STA. Eventually; I got the information from both the STA and Rizzi's office. Interestingly, the copy I got from Rizzi's office was incomplete, and partially illegible. Fortunately, the copies I got from STA were complete. Consequently, I was able to determine the validity of the STA complaint to the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education alleging that Superintendent's representation was not truthful.

In my request to the STA, I did not say the superintendent was refusing to give me a copy as you falsely claim in your letter. I wrote "superintendent is either unable or unwilling to let me look at it." This exercise showed that both parts of my sentence were correct. It appears that the superintendent was unable first. Then, she was unwilling, as evidenced by the incomplete and partially illegible document she emailed me.

This experience further reinforced my opinion, which I wrote on June 6, 2012 to former School Committee chair Joyce Hussein (you and the rest of the School Committee members were also copied). Dr. Rizzi cannot be entrusted to provide the school committee members the full and complete disclosure of the issues. In my opinion, she tends to provide a one-sided and barely enough information for the school committee members to think the way she wants. In fact, in her 2010 evaluation, I wrote: "In the efforts to spread "positive" information, the incumbent does not adequately represent the full realities including shortcomings and areas needing improvement in our District." "My general perception is that Dr. Rizzi offers as little information as possible for the School Committee to carry out the meetings. Over the last year, on several occasions I have asked for information, and Dr. Rizzi offered active or passive resistance (For example, I requested notice when police/fire/ambulance is called to the schools, as well as periodic financial reports providing information about expenses against budget on all accounts, both of which she

has not honored.” Please also keep in mind that I am on the record for complaining to the superintendent for providing school committee members meeting packets that are too “skimpy.”

Therefore, in the future, I will not hesitate to check the accuracy of the statements any way I see fit, and as I deem necessary.

Deborah, I always considered you a good Christian. Your recent unprofessional, unethical, illegal, and depraved conduct surprises me a great deal and breaks my heart. You even lied to the press which published: Sovinee wrote. "The School Committee has chosen to allow the administration to begin the research and fact finding that could lead to a safe solution for this area." Both you and I know that the quoted sentence you emailed to Jeff Pickette was a big lie.

Please do not forget, an important role of the school committee is to supervise the superintendent, and not the other way around. As such, I will continue to pursue what I think is in the best interest of the schoolchildren, parents, and the town of Stoughton. I will do so by checking facts, by writing letters, and by going to the press and the authorities as necessary. I invite you and other school committee members to do the same.

Sincerely Yours,

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