

October 18, 2012

Dr. Ural,

The previous chair of the School Committee reprimanded you for behavior regarded as grossly inappropriate and unprofessional. You have also been reprimanded for behavior that “circumvents the [School Committee’s] ability to act as a board on matters that concern us.”

I am writing this letter, and copying the rest of the School Committee, to make them aware of recent actions that represent an escalation in unprofessional behavior.

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.

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.

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.”

**For the above reasons, I am removing you from the negotiating team on teacher evaluation.**

From the Massachusetts Association of School Committees manual on school leadership: *“The unity your School Committee presents in negotiations is vital to its success... Agree on a process*

*by which the School Committee (through a spokesperson or chief negotiator) will correct misinformation, untruths, or rumors that might surface during negotiations.”*

*Maintain a personally positive and non-reactive stance throughout negotiations. Believe that the process will end successfully, and don't take the union's statements or tactical moves personally.”*

*Examine every action and statement in light of the possibility that the role of the School Committee as a policy maker will be compromised...”*

Consistently, your behavior has distracted the School Committee and Administration from working together to improve the education of our children. I am going to quote from the MASC guidelines on School Committee member behavior:

*“They build strong personal relationships.”*

*“They communicate problems and strive to resolve them amicably.”*

*“Act only as a body as prescribed by law and not as individual members.”*

*“Engage in advocacy on behalf of students and their schools and promote the benefits of the public school system to the community.”*

Since we are required by law to undergo School Committee training on the roles, responsibilities and ethics involved in being a School Committee member, it would be in your, and the public whom you serve, best interest if you repeated this training.

As a School Committee we can discuss whether you should be censured for unprofessional behavior.

Deborah Sovinee  
Chair, Stoughton School Committee