

On 9/26, Gabe Gilman, HUUSD board Vice Chair, submitted a letter to the HUUSD board detailing his lingering concerns over our 5/24 executive session and suggested motions for how to address those concerns. Subsequently, our board received a written Open Meeting Law complaint on 10/6 from the Valley Reporter and Waterbury Record. As both of those letters speak to my possible as chair, I would like to respond.

The basic contention of both letters is that nothing of our May 24 executive session was legal. The implication is that I lied to this board about the subject to be discussed, and I did so with the intention of breaking the open meeting law. The accusation offends both my integrity and character. The executive session was requested out of necessity. There was no pretext, no ruse, and no intent to have an illegal discussion. Board behavior had deteriorated to the point at which dynamics and failure to follow policy or respect roles and responsibilities threatened our ability to retain members of our administration. The outcome could have been worse than losing one principal.

To further address implied wrongdoing: I have never spoken of the June 26 conference call that Superintendent Nease and I had with the Vice Chair, because I never understood there to be a reason to. Based on what our attorney had advised through the Superintendent, no further action was needed on the June 14 memorandum past the vote of confidence. Therefore it was not on the June 28 agenda, which had been completed and submitted for distribution prior to our call. The Vice Chair's suggestion contradicted advice, but I believed that anyone wanting to discuss it at our June 28 meeting could ask to do so during additions and deletions and the board could decide. The Vice Chair was absent from the meeting, there was no such motion, and we moved on. That was my last direct communication from the Vice Chair regarding the topic. In the time since that call, per our policy, he could have made another agenda request. He did not. Had I refused, he could have made a motion during the portion of our meetings devoted to additions and deletions, other business, or whenever else he saw fit. He did not. Instead he abstained from the vote on our August 30 resolution. If he was opposed to moving on, he should have indicated so that night.

This board's August 30 resolution affirmed the desire that all board members follow policy and respect roles and responsibilities. We spent a significant amount of time on this during our September 13 retreat. That evening's conversation focused on the importance of all board members working to meet those expectations and touched upon the ethical obligation to respect the outcomes of our meeting discussions and decisions. I was shocked to learn in next morning's paper that the Vice Chair was unwilling to respect the board's decision on this, especially as I had never heard from him on the topic since June 26.

Although individuals may have voted against our successful motion that committees adhere to open meeting laws our board expects all committees to do so. Many different positions were taken when adopting a code of ethics, yet our board expects all members to respect certain guidelines. We expect equal respect for Vermont open meeting laws. The September 27 letter admonishing the board for infractions, was likely a violation of the law it purported to defend. It argued a position. It suggested motions. A board member wishing to have a conversation and impact decisions needs to follow policy and bring concerns to the board table.

When members miss meetings, they are unable to participate in discussions and votes. The board does not stop work until their return. It doesn't postpone business in order to revisit or catch them up on what was missed. It is the responsibility of individual members to follow up

properly. If somebody must revisit a decision whether or not present at the original vote, a motion to rescind or amend is in order.

I regret taking board time to respond to these letters. I am hoping that, after tonight, we can be more successful at moving on to our work. Our students and community are depending on us; I believe that continuing to focus on previously settled matters is counterproductive to their needs.