

Statement of Eric Epstein
June 10, 2019

At the end of the last Board Meeting convened on March 20, 2019, Mr. Engle read a statement which is included in the minutes slated for approval. I contend the comments were inserted inappropriately under the banner of Committee Reports. In my opinion, Mr. Engle's comments contain factual inaccuracies and mischaracterizations. I will not vote to approve the minutes.

Let the record reflect that I did not receive a copy of Mr. Chardo's letter or Mr. Engle's prepared comments. Mr. Engle's comments were not authorized or vetted by the Board or any affiliated Committee.

Out of a sense of fair play and balance, I will be entering my response to those comments into the record tonight.

The goal of the Board's investigation was to review the Administration's authorization to spend taxpayer dollars for work not performed. No allegation of criminal behavior was ever made. In fact, Board members clearly stated that they sought to examine the decision making that occurred outside of the Board's authorization, implement Lessons Learned, and in no way sought to financially penalize workers.

Neither the District Attorney's Office or Mr. Engle interviewed me or the three Board members who raised the issue of paying for work not performed in the summers of 2016 and 2017.

The "internal investigation" was suspended in July-August, 2018 when the President of the Board declined to convene a Special Executive Session.

According to Mr. Engle:

Neither I nor the District Attorney's Office are aware of any investigation or findings issued as of [this] date by the Auditor General's Office. I was advised by District Attorney Francis Chardo that the Attorney General's Office does not have jurisdiction over this matter under the Commonwealth Attorney's Act and therefore, it is solely the Office of the District Attorney that is charged with reviewing this matter. That investigation is now complete.

However, two media outlets have contacted the Auditor General's Office. These news outlets - which Mr. Engle assailed in his comments - have confirmed that the Auditor General will investigate the issue. The Auditor General does have jurisdiction to review the misappropriation of taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Chardo sent a one paragraph letter to Mr. Engle's office dated May 17, 2019. Mr. Chardo's one paragraph letter was in response to Mr. Engle's letter dated December 28, 2018. Since Mr. Engle's correspondence of December 28, 2018 was not reviewed by the Board, four board members decided to communicate directly to the District Attorney.

That letter was sent on January 19, 2019, and called into question the impartiality and objectivity of the Administration's request for an investigation. (Enclosure)

Mr. Chardo dismissed the Complaint:

I reviewed your letter and correspondence forwarded by the School Board members Richard Mazzatesta, Eric Epstein, Brian Faleshock, and Jeanne Webster, including attachments. The facts outlined by the Board Members Mazzatesta, Epstein,

Faleshock, and Webster could not support criminal charges against any person and I am closing the investigation. I had a detective conduct preliminary work on this matter but the expenditure of any further resources on this matter would not be in the public interest.

Again, no criminal charges were alleged by the four Board members. The core issues remain the same, and have yet to be investigated: The misappropriation of taxpayer dollars for work not performed, and executed without Board authorization or legal counsel.

Mr. Engle's editorial comments - which he is entitled to make as a resident of the school district - represent his opinion.

I believe this matter has been fully and fairly investigated by the District Attorney and should be considered by all to be closed. I hasten to add that the District Attorney is an individual for whom I have the highest order of personal and professional respect and I would not deign to question his integrity, thoroughness or impartiality. It was unfortunate that differences in policy in turn lead to baseless allegations of criminal conduct and it is important both to this District and the individuals involved for the public to know that there was no substance whatsoever to those claims. I both hope and trust that the media outlets that reported those allegations will also report the conclusions of the District Attorney.

Mr. Engle's statement is inconsistent with the facts. This matter is open, and has not been closed out. However, I do agree with Mr. Engle that the media should report the conclusions of all statutory bodies.

Neither Mr. Chardo or Mr. Engle produced a Statement of Facts.

Neither Mr. Chardo or Mr. Engle contacted the Auditor General's Office.

Neither Mr. Chardo or Mr. Engle interviewed the four Board members who submitted the follow letter.

I do not believe a one paragraph letter submitted by Mr. Chardo and interpreted by Mr. Engle constitutes a thorough investigation.

At this point, I suggest we move forward, and await the conclusions and recommendations from the Auditor General's office.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Epstein