

COLLINS, LOUGHRAN & PELOQUIN, P.C.

Attorneys at Law
320 Norwood Park South
Norwood, Massachusetts 02062

Tel. (781) 762-2229 • Fax (781) 762-1803

Philip Collins
Michael C. Loughran
Leo J. Peloquin
Tim D. Norris
Kevin P. Feeley, Jr.
Laurie W. Engdahl
Daniel C. Brown

October 4, 2007

Mr. Neil Cohen
Massachusetts Inspector General's Office
One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108

Re: Assabet Valley Regional Vocational School District

Dear Mr. Cohen:

As you may know, this firm represents the Assabet Valley Regional Vocational School District.

I am writing this letter because it has been brought to my attention that some of your investigatory methods appear to have exceeded your statutory authority. Specifically, you have, on several occasions, entered the school building of Assabet Valley Regional Vocational School District, unannounced and without authorization, in violation of the School District's procedures to ensure the security and safety of students. You have apparently gained access by "flashing your badge" at unsuspecting employees who have been led to believe that you are authorized to enter school premises at your whim. On September 5, 2007, you entered the automotive technology shop to speak to a teacher while he was teaching. You did not identify yourself but you "flashed your badge" and spoke to the teacher while he was in the middle of a shop class. Common sense suggests that teachers are responsible for the safety of students while they are engaged in shop class. When you distract a teacher from his duties while he is teaching, you not only disrupt the classroom, but you endanger the safety of each and every student in the class, because they are unsupervised by the teacher who is supposed to be supervising them. In a vocational school, where students often use dangerous tools and machines, this is a big problem. Unfortunately, this event has been characteristic of the way in which you have conducted your "investigation."

On August 23, 2007, you made one of your unannounced visits to the school. During that visit, you demanded to be let into a safe containing accounts payable files. You further demanded to review the files without any representative of the School District being present. You further refused to tell the School District whether you had removed any original records from the safe. You led the School District representatives present to believe that you had the

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authority to undertake this absurdly abusive investigatory method. At no time during any of these visits did you advise anyone of their rights.

Another disturbing behavior you have exhibited is your propensity to begin conversations by making baseless accusations against the Superintendent-Director, Eugene Carlo. For example, when you met with Ellen Ronzio, you told her that a particular employee had not been rehired, and that Mr. Carlo had told you that it was because she was involved in the WBZ story. As you know, Mr. Carlo never said this to you, so your statement to Ms. Ronzio was untruthful. Although you may have seen this investigatory technique on your favorite television show, in the real world, making baseless and untruthful statements about people to their subordinates is damaging to an organization, and totally unprofessional. I am led to understand that this tactic on your part is not an isolated incident.

The above-described instances are just a few examples of the type of conduct that you have engaged in when dealing with this investigation of Assabet Valley Regional Vocational School District. There are many other similar incidents that I am aware of, including many incidents in which you have gained unauthorized access to the school building, and have intimidated staff by "flashing your badge."

Going forward, you must make appointments prior to meeting with school personnel. When entering the school, you must check in at the main office and receive a visitor's pass. At that point, the person with whom you have an appointment will come and meet you at the main office. If you do not follow these reasonable security procedures that apply to all persons who wish to enter the school building, then the police will be notified, and you will be removed from the building.

If you wish to review documents, please direct all such requests through my office. The School District will continue to cooperate with your investigation. However, you will be able to access documents only after a written request, by appointment, and accompanied by an agent of the School District. Finally, I have advised my client that persons interviewed by your office are entitled to have counsel present (see 945 CMR 1.05(2)). So, please be aware of this and provide ample lead-time when making appointments to interview District personnel.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to telephone me.

Very truly yours,



Tim D. Norris

TDN/dah

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cc: Eugene Carlo, Superintendent-Director
Gregory W. Sullivan, Inspector General
Martha Coakley, Attorney General
A. Joseph DeNucci, Auditor
Martin Benison, Comptroller
Kevin M. Burke, Secretary of Public Safety