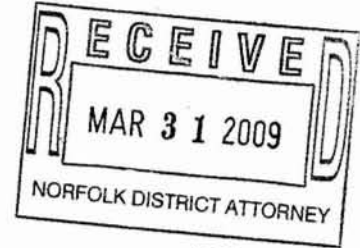


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March 31, 2009

Honorable William R. Keating  
Norfolk County District Attorney  
45 Shawmut Road  
Canton, MA 02021

RE: Open Meeting Law Violation in Stoughton

Dear District Attorney Keating:

The purpose of this letter is to complain about a recent open meeting violation and to request your office to investigate the matter. Injunctive action is also requested.

**Indisputable facts:**

- During the February 24, 2009 meeting of the Stoughton School Committee, superintendent Sarno announced that a "sub-committee" comprised of him and school committee chair Alan Mills had met with the town manager, town accountant and two selectmen to negotiate the budget cuts for the school and other municipal departments.
- To the best of my knowledge, this "sub-committee" meeting with the town manager, town accountant and two selectmen was not a publicly posted open meeting.
- Superintendent Sarno further stated that, according to his agreement 2010 School budget will be reduced by \$2,095,721 while the budget for other town departments will be reduced by \$1,421,642.
- The fairness and the validity of this 60/40 split of the revenue deficit were hotly challenged at the School Committee meeting. Presenting a detailed analysis, I requested that the school department should suffer a lesser budget cut, if any.
- Nevertheless, Stoughton school committee was not given the opportunity to vote formally on this significant budget cut.
- Last night, superintendent Sarno addressed the Stoughton Finance committee and proposed to cut the school department budget by \$2,095,721, which was not formally authorized by the School Committee.
- The Finance Committee is anticipated to vote on superintendent Sarno's proposal tonight or tomorrow night

**Discussion:**

As written by your office, the purpose of the Open Meeting Law is to eliminate much of the secrecy surrounding the deliberations and decisions on which public policy is based. It accomplishes this purpose by requiring open discussion of governmental action at public

meetings. The requirements of the Open Meeting Law grow out of the idea that the democratic process depends on the public having knowledge about the considerations underlying governmental action, for without that knowledge people are not able to judge the merits of action taken by their representatives. The overriding intent of the Open Meeting Law is therefore to foster and indeed require open discussion of governmental action at public meetings.

Therefore, by not securing the School Committee's formal approval or ratification of the sub-committee deal, superintendent Sarno and Alan Mills have violated the open meeting law.

**Requested Actions:**

- Find superintendent Sarno and Alan Mills to be in violation of the open meeting law.
- Require them to discuss and bring this matter to a full school committee vote in an open meeting.
- Set aside any vote of the Finance Committee may have taken (scheduled for tonight or tomorrow night) until after a legal decision of the Stoughton School Committee is presented to them

**Available Evidence:**

Upon request, I will gladly provide your office with the audio recordings of the 3/24/09, 3/26/09, and 3/30/09 meetings. I would also be pleased to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erdem Ural', written in a cursive style.

Erdem Ural, Ph.D.