



State of New Jersey  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
PO Box 500  
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

PHILIP D. MURPHY  
Governor

SHEILA Y. OLIVER  
Lt. Governor

LAMONT O. REPOLLET, Ed.D.  
Commissioner

SCHOOL ETHICS COMMISSION

September 4, 2018

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Maplewood, NJ 07040

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**LETTER DECISION AND  
NOTICE OF HEARING**

SUBJECT: WALTER FIELDS v. STEPHANIE LAWSON-MUHAMMAD, SOUTH ORANGE-MAPLEWOOD BOARD OF EDUCATION, ESSEX COUNTY, SCHOOL ETHICS COMMISSION DOCKET #C34-18

Dear Parties:

Pursuant to notice dated August 21, 2018, you were advised that the above-captioned matter would be discussed at the School Ethics Commission's (Commission) meeting on August 28, 2018. Upon review and consideration of the Complaint filed on May 25, 2018, the Answer to Complaint with Allegation of Frivolous Filing filed on July 11, 2018, and the Response to Allegation of Frivolous Filing filed on August 21, 2018, the Commission made its determination and took action at its meeting on August 28, 2018.

In this regard, the Commission voted to find that the Complaint was **not** frivolous in accordance with the standard set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:28-1.2, and **declined** to impose sanctions pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:12-29(e). More specifically, the Commission found no evidence that Complainant filed the Complaint in bad faith solely for the purpose of harassment, delay or malicious injury. The Commission also did not have information to suggest that Complainant should have known that the Complaint was without any reasonable basis in law or equity, or that it could not be supported by a good faith argument for an extension, modification or reversal of existing law.

In addition, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:28-10.8(a), the Commission voted to **retain this matter for a hearing**, which is currently scheduled for **Tuesday, October 30, 2018**. At this hearing, which will take place at approximately **9:30 a.m.** at the **New Jersey Department of Education, 100 Riverview**

**Plaza, First Floor Conference Room, Trenton, New Jersey, Complainant** will have the burden to prove the alleged violations of N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e) and (f) of the Code of Ethics for School Board Members (Code), within the standards set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:28-6.4.

Because the Complaint solely alleges violations of the Code, proceedings shall take place in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:28-10.8, a copy of which is enclosed herein for your reference, and in accordance with the rules of the Office of Administrative Law, N.J.A.C. 1:1-1.1 et seq. In preparation for the hearing, the parties **must**:

- 1) **By no later than Friday, September 21, 2018**, complete the enclosed Verification of Attendance form, and submit it to the Commission. The completed Verification of Attendance can either be faxed to the Commission at (609) 633-0279, or e-mailed to [schoolethics@doe.nj.gov](mailto:schoolethics@doe.nj.gov). ***Each party shall provide a copy of this filing on his or her adversary, along with proof of service in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:28-1.7.***
- 2) **By no later than Friday, October 12, 2018**, provide the Commission with copies of *any and all* documents, Exhibits, videos, etc., that are intended to be introduced as evidence at the hearing, even if this information has already been provided to the Commission. ***Each party shall provide a copy of this filing on his or her adversary, along with proof of service in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:28-1.7.***

To the extent that the parties may wish to submit a joint stipulation of facts and/or issues, such a joint stipulation should be submitted to the Commission by no later than **Friday, October 19, 2018**.

If you have questions about the scheduling of this matter, or need additional information, please contact our office at (609) 376-9115 to schedule a conference call.

Sincerely,



Kathryn A. Whalen, Director  
School Ethics Commission

Enclosures