

Speaker ONE: [00:00:00](#) It was an act to ensure the right of the public to have advanced notice of, and to attend the meeting of public bodies to which any business [inaudible 00:00:07] is discussed or acted upon and whereas in accordance with the provisions of this act the [inaudible 00:00:12] commission as caused the minutes of this meeting to be published by having the date, place, and time thereof, especially within the department of education, [inaudible 00:00:19] office, and o- notices also have been given to the State House Press Corps. Now therefore be resolved that by adopting this resolution the [inaudible 00:00:27] commission states its intention to convene a public meeting to conduct the states business on November 27th, 2018. Can we have role call, please?

Speaker 1: [00:00:37](#) I'm sorry, Michael [Karichy 00:00:39]?

Michael K.: [00:00:39](#) Here.

Speaker 1: [00:00:40](#) Michael Collins? Mi- Mark [Ficklestein 00:00:43].

Mark F.: [00:00:43](#) Here.

Speaker 1: [00:00:43](#) Daniel Kaplan?

Daniel K.: [00:00:44](#) Here.

Speaker 1: [00:00:45](#) Dennis Roberts.

Dennis R.: [00:00:45](#) Here.

Speaker 1: [00:00:46](#) Jude [Tanela 00:00:46].

Jude T.: [00:00:46](#) Here.

Speaker 1: [00:00:47](#) Richard [Topco 00:00:48].

Richard T.: [00:00:48](#) Here.

Speaker 1: [00:00:49](#) Robert Bender.

Robert B.: [00:00:50](#) Here.

Speaker ONE: [00:00:53](#) Welcome everybody, I hope everyone had a very nice Thanksgiving.

Male: [00:00:55](#) You too.

Speaker ONE: [00:00:56](#) And, uh, we have a, a hearing today and what we're gonna be doing right now is we're gonna be going into executive session to discuss some of the procedural part of it, and then we'll open it up again when we begin our hearing. Yes, and we're going into executive session to get legal advice. Okay, uh, [crosstalk 00:01:15] whereas in order to protect the personal privacy and the situation where the public interest might be to serve in public meetings at from this public body to exclude the public from that portion of the meeting when certain matters are discussed and they'll therefore be resolved. They're consistent with the [inaudible 00:01:30] of this, of NJSA10:4S12, the school ethics commission will now adjourn to executive session to discuss confidential complaints and advisories and to obtain legal advice, in this case legal advice regarding complaints. Um, can we have a ...

Male: [00:01:47](#) I make a motion to go to executive session.

Speaker ONE: [00:01:49](#) Okay. We need to open up the doors and, uh, they will sign ...

Speaker 2: [00:01:53](#) Mmm.

Speaker ONE: [00:01:54](#) Have to sign on the commitment.

Speaker 2: [00:01:55](#) Yeah I think so, I'm just not sure why [inaudible 00:01:59].

Speaker ONE: [00:01:58](#) Well I think everybody has a copy of what everybody else has.

Speaker 2: [00:02:00](#) Oh, okay, gotcha, (laughs).

Speaker ONE: [00:02:00](#) So, so [crosstalk 00:02:00].

Male: [00:02:00](#) 10:00 ... 10:01, I think.

Male: [00:02:05](#) Yep.

Speaker 2: [00:02:06](#) Thank you. [inaudible 00:02:08].

Speaker ONE: [00:02:16](#) So we have the [inaudible 00:02:16].

Speaker 2: [00:02:17](#) Great. Why don't you just hold onto it [inaudible 00:02:17] then we'll do distribution [inaudible 00:02:17]. Just let me know whenever you're ready.

Male: [00:02:47](#) Oh, I'm ready. [crosstalk 00:02:47].

Speaker 2: [00:02:50](#) Just sign by your name and then I also believe you have to fill this out too.

Male: [00:02:52](#) And this.

Speaker 2: [00:02:52](#) I don't know why so many, (laughs). Thanks, and then if you can just leave it there, thank you.

Male: [00:02:52](#) Okay.

Speaker 2: [00:02:52](#) Oh there it is.

Speaker ONE: [00:03:42](#) Good morning. [inaudible 00:03:42].

Speaker 2: [00:03:58](#) Thank you. [inaudible 00:03:58].

Speaker ONE: [00:04:36](#) Good morning everyone. Uh, this is a, a public hearing and, um, we, uh, have amplification but we're also recording this as well. So for the record can we have a, uh, uh, if you'll state your name and your position.

Walter: [00:04:48](#) Walter Fields [inaudible 00:04:51].

Adam: [00:04:52](#) And, uh, good morning, Adam [inaudible 00:04:54] from the law firm of Adams [Goodyears 00:04:55] um, and I'm here on behalf of, uh, Stephanie, uh, Lawson Muhammad.

Stephanie: [00:05:01](#) Good morning, Stephanie Lawson Muhammad, South Orange Maplewood school district, respondent.

Adam: [00:05:10](#) Okay. This is a hearing in the matter of, uh, caption [inaudible 00:05:14] El Fields versus Stephanie Lawson Muhammad, see 34.18 for serious [inaudible 00:05:20] the school ethics commission pursuant to NJAC6A28-10.8. commission review of complaints alleging violations involving the code of ethics for school board members. All hearings shall be conducted in accordance with the rules of the OAL NHAC1:1. Beginning with a complaint in each party, uh, uh, or his counsel shall have the, uh, opportunity to make an, uh, opening statement to the commission presenting witnesses that he or she has brought. Respondents opening statement may be presented after complainants opening statement or after complainants case has been presented. Two, complainant has the burden to factually prove a violation under the code of ethics pursuant to the standards set forth in NJAC6A28-6.4. A copy of the regulations was provided with your schedule and notice. All persons appearing must sign in. This proceeding is being reported and

gestures cannot be reported. Please speak audible at all times throughout the hearing. Persons providing testimony must be placed under oath and must state their full name for the record. Witnesses are subject to cross-examination by the opposing party. The commission may ask questions of the parties and/or witnesses.

Adam: [00:06:38](#) Each party will have the right to provide a closing argument, but complainant shall be allowed to present the final closing statement. The commission has been provided with a copy of all the documents that were sent to date. The parties must introduce documents into evidence. Only evidence which is emitted by the chairperson into the record will be considered by the commission when making its decision. At the conclusion of the hearing the commission will go into executive session to discuss the matter and we'll recommend that a decision be drafted detailing its finding of fact and conclusions of all. This decision ...

Speaker 2: [00:07:15](#) Just say later meeting.

Adam: [00:07:17](#) Uh, this decision will be adopted at a later meeting and will be mailed to the parties thereafter. If necessary the commission may request an extension of time to issue its decision. The commission may recommend a reprimand centure- suspension removal of the school official if violation is found. A finding of no violation by the commission shall constitute final agency action. The- that's the procedures, um, and, uh, under, uh, our regulations the person who is the complainant would, uh, be giving the opening statement as to, uh, the reason why you're here.

Walter: [00:07:54](#) Good morning. Uh, my name is Walter Fields. I reside at [inaudible 00:08:00] township of Maplewood where I have lived for the last 22 years. I am the complainant in the matter that occurred today under document C34-810. I want to thank the commission for reviewing the issues I raise tonight complained against South Orange Maplewood School member Stephanie Lawson Muhammad and for consideration [inaudible 00:08:19] this issue for a vote hearing. I also want to thank the commission for its determination that this complaint is not frivolous and filed in bad faith solely for the purpose of harassment [inaudible 00:08:31]. I filed a complaint over a specific concern of the behavior of the respondent as a publicly elected member of the South Orange Maplewood school district, and a general concern over the conduct of public officials representing themselves as such for the purpose of

evading reasonable expectations that comply with the law in the matter expected of the citizen. This is the focus of my complaint and my testimony this morning. I'm not alone in expressing concern of the conduct of Miss Lawson Muhammad, the trustees of the village of South Orange township developing a body of municipality which shares our local school district unanimously communicated this concern to the board of education over the treatment of the village employee by Miss Lawson Muhammad.

Walter: [00:09:10](#) The local newspaper [inaudible 00:09:12] Maplewood and news record call [inaudible 00:09:15] reservation, as did residents [inaudible 00:09:18] board of education. [inaudible 00:09:21] to take action prompted by filing a complaint with the school [inaudible 00:09:26]. While filing [inaudible 00:09:28] commenting on relevant statutes as directed by the commission because [inaudible 00:09:33] a common complaint and that law enforcement has a strained relationship with the African American community.

Walter: [00:09:38](#) I have worked on issues with police in this state dating back to 1990 when as political director of the New Jersey NAACP I chaired a public hearing on police brutality, worked in liaison with the office of the state attorney general of the [inaudible 00:09:52] and worked with the administration's governor Jim [Florio 00:09:55] as he crafted the states first executive order on racial profiling. Most recently I advocated on behalf of black news and resulted in meeting with police in 2017 after our townships independence day fireworks event.

Walter: [00:10:09](#) In so much if we can acknowledge the many tragedies that have resolved from brutality of police officers [inaudible 00:10:15]. We cannot allow that history to cover the facts in this matter. We use those tragedies as a reason to excuse behavior that portrays building better relationships between police and the African American community. This incident should serve as a cautionary tale to not make generalizations about either the police or motorists, and to acknowledge that some officers are desensitized to patterns of racial bias and discharge their duties in a thoughtful way, as was the case with the officer in this incident.

Walter: [00:10:46](#) The incident in question occurred in [inaudible 00:10:48] 27th, 2010 during a routine [inaudible 00:10:51] traffic stop made by South Orange police officer, Shawn [Hurst 00:10:55] upon South Orange resident, Stephanie Lawson Muhammad. At this time I would like to have a video shown if that would be allowed.

Speaker ONE: [00:11:04](#) Do we have the opening statements?

Speaker 2: [00:11:05](#) Yeah.

Speaker ONE: [00:11:06](#) Yeah. Um, that's part of your opening statement, but we will consider that after the opening statement by the, uh, respondent. Okay, is that end of your, uh, opening statement? Okay, respondent? [inaudible 00:11:19].

Adam: [00:11:19](#) If I could reserve opening statement for, uh, when we present our case, if that would be acceptable.

Speaker ONE: [00:11:26](#) Sure. Okay, um, you have, uh, now, you have a, uh, question.

Walter: [00:11:34](#) The question was would the video be allowed to be shown at this time?

Speaker ONE: [00:11:38](#) Okay. Uh, that's something that I, I believe that, uh, uh, you want to bring into, uh, evidence into this case?

Walter: [00:11:45](#) It was part of the original submission [inaudible 00:11:47].

Speaker ONE: [00:11:48](#) Okay. Um, I have, uh, no problem with that, um ...

Speaker 2: [00:11:53](#) Actually that was part of the statement [inaudible 00:11:58].

Speaker ONE: [00:11:58](#) Yeah.

Adam: [00:11:58](#) Uh, Mr. Jefferson, yeah I didn't mean to ...

Speaker ONE: [00:11:58](#) No, go ahead.

Adam: [00:11:59](#) [inaudible 00:11:59] stop talking. Um, we, we submitted, uh, a written document yesterday objecting to the introduction of the video tape for a couple of reasons. I'm not sure if the, um, commissioners and, and yourself had an opportunity to r- to review it, but, essentially what Mr. Fields is trying to do is introduce his video tape. Mr. Fields wasn't at the scene, he wasn't part of the incident. Um, and obviously there's no officer here to testify, there's nobody from, from the township or anybody else to testify.

Adam: [00:12:26](#) So Mr. Fields obviously wants to use this tape, but we don't know if this video is, is the actual video, if it's the video in its entirety. There's no way to authenticate this video. Um, and, and that's the problem here about what Mr. Fields wants to rely on this evidence to prove his case. Um, you know, it just raises a

whole, a lot of questions as to whether or not what, what appeared on the tape is, is again the actual video, we don't know if it's, if the full length, is it an edited version? Uh, is it partial? Was it modified? We still don't know what the source of the video is, um, and in order for, you know, Mr. Fields to, to introduce the- that evidence, all those questions needed and should have been answered already and without anybody but Mr. Fields to talk about this video tape or allow it to play it, it's improper, so respondent respectfully submits that Mr. Fields should be precluded from, um, showing the video as part of his case.

- Speaker ONE: [00:13:22](#) Can I just ask you a question, did you, uh, review the, uh, video?
- Adam: [00:13:27](#) We received it, um, the day before Thanksgiving in my office, yes.
- Speaker ONE: [00:13:31](#) Did you, you reviewed it?
- Adam: [00:13:33](#) Yeah I, I had a chance we, we received it on, on a flash drive, yes.
- Speaker 2: [00:13:41](#) Ask him [inaudible 00:13:42].
- Adam: [00:13:41](#) And, and just so long as [inaudible 00:13:42] obviously, you know, receiving it, you know, two business days before the hearing didn't provide us even an opportunity to try to determine if what we received, again, is the full video, is it the full video? Was it edited? Modified in any respect? You know, there, there's no proof and nobody here that could testify as to the accurateness and the authenti- authenticity of that video. [crosstalk 00:14:03].
- Speaker ONE: [00:14:03](#) Mr. [crosstalk 00:14:04].
- Speaker 2: [00:14:04](#) You need to put him under oath if he's gonna testify [inaudible 00:14:07] participate.
- Speaker ONE: [00:14:08](#) Okay. Um, if you have to respond to that, uh, then we need to put you under oath for that [inaudible 00:14:15].
- Speaker 2: [00:14:14](#) Okay, uh, do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth Mr. [inaudible 00:14:25].
- Walter: [00:14:24](#) So in response to the respondents, uh, counsel, uh, the video was originally submitted as part of the complaint that was

received by the respondent when I filed it against Miss Lawson Muhammad. Uh, the authenticity of the video, uh, can be easily determined by comparing it to a video that was made in a public domain by newspapers when this incident occurred, [inaudible 00:14:52] to this [inaudible 00:14:53] immediately last night and I received counsel's letter. Uh, the video has been in the public record and has been viewed thousands of time. Um, to suggest that I have somehow altered the video, um, I believe is not being truthful in the fact that counsel should have had this video months ago when I submitted the complaint and I provided a copy [inaudible 00:15:15] into response.

- Speaker ONE: [00:15:18](#) Can I ask you how you got, uh, ahold of that video?
- Walter: [00:15:21](#) I received the video anonymously, uh, I still do not know who sent the video. It was the same video that was published by local newspapers including the Star Leger [inaudible 00:15:32].
- Speaker ONE: [00:15:31](#) Okay. Yes, [crosstalk 00:15:41].
- Adam: [00:15:41](#) And I'm not suggesting by any means that Mr. Fields himself modified or, or manipulated the tape, that's not what I'm suggesting. What I am suggesting that, uh, again, you know, I think it's, um, not only equitable but how, how could it possibly be done that, that Mr. Fields is suggesting that this tape needs to be compared to tapes that, you know, a news outlet has. I mean I think if you would even compare what's out there the, the tape, the flash drive that was submitted as a, uh, the length of that video was different from news outlets, what, what they published. So the, the question really is, again, Mr. Fields acknowledging that he received this, um, anonymously.
- Adam: [00:16:18](#) You know, the normal course, if he would have received a public document from a public entity would, uh, make an open request and you would have a letter or some sort of correspondence from the custodian of public records saying that this is a true and accurate public document. We don't have this in this case, and again if he received it anonymously it, again, by, by definition we don't know where Mr. Fields received it, if, if it is the accurate tape we, we don't know, it just raises all these questions and it's really not fair in this case to, for Mr. Fields to be able to rely on a video when we don't even know where the video came from and there's nobody here to say that that was an accurate video in its entirety. We don't know that.
- Walter: [00:16:51](#) Can I respond?

Speaker ONE: [00:16:51](#) Yes.

Walter: [00:17:00](#) Counsel responded to this [inaudible 00:17:03] and agreed to a state of facts that was based upon this video. If counsel rejected to this video counsel has sufficient time since the time that the complaint was first filed to object. He had no objections at that time.

Adam: [00:17:23](#) If I could just, one more thing ... [crosstalk 00:17:25] In terms of, you know, correspondence from the commission telling the parties, um, to identify what documents and what witnesses they needed to submit, um, there were deadlines we complied with, Mr. Fields did not comply with the initial deadline. He was directed to supply not only a, his witnesses, which he did, but he was directed to supply any documents or videos by dates and he did not. The commission therefore, you know, graciously gave him an extension and allowed him to submit it by last week, which he did. Um, and obviously once again by him submitting the video of the original timeframe without receiving, you know, or asking for consent, um, and again, you know, day before a, a holiday, or two days before the hearing for them to say, "Okay, here's the video I'm gonna, to use."

Adam: [00:18:09](#) That's prejudicial to the respondent. Now it's one thing if he would have submitted it two, three weeks ago when he was supposed to, and then we could have had a discussion about trying to figure out where the video came from, is it the full accurate video? But by virtue of him su- submitting it at the eleventh hour, two business days before the hearing, and again it, st- the questions are still there. There's nobody here to authenticate this video and say that this video was, you know, a certain length in terms of minutes a- and seconds, and this is the video. Nothing from the custodian of public records from the township or the police department.

Speaker ONE: [00:18:40](#) Okay. [inaudible 00:18:40] just make that [inaudible 00:18:49]. Yep, all right, um, what, uh, the commission will do in this case here, we'll reserve judgment on the authenticity of that tape and once we review that tape that any, uh, anything, any changes and so on to that can be made by council and by the, uh, complainant.

Speaker 2: [00:19:19](#) Challenges.

Speaker ONE: [00:19:20](#) Challenges to that. And, uh, and then we, uh, we'll render our decision at a later time based upon not only the view of this tape but any objections that you saw within that tape.

Adam: [00:19:36](#) And just for clarification we would have an opportunity in writing to [crosstalk 00:19:40].

Speaker ONE: [00:19:39](#) In writing, yes.

Adam: [00:19:42](#) To submit challenges [crosstalk 00:19:42].

Speaker ONE: [00:19:41](#) Yes, absolutely. Okay, and, and if there's no other further discussion, uh, uh, we will then, uh, take a look at the tape and, and, um, uh, [inaudible 00:19:55].

Speaker 2: [00:19:56](#) I'm just gonna ask everybody, you need to turn your mics off, please. Just push the button down. [inaudible 00:20:05]. There's intentionally no audio, [inaudible 00:21:03].

Video: Female: [00:20:00](#) I'm sorry, was I speeding?

Video: Male: [00:21:57](#) Yes, you were speeding, that's why I'm stopping you.

Video: Female: [00:21:59](#) [inaudible 00:21:59].

Video: Male: [00:21:59](#) Doing 37 in a 25.

Video: Female: [00:22:00](#) [inaudible 00:22:00].

Video: Male: [00:22:01](#) Okay, do you have your registration [inaudible 00:22:03].

Video: Female: [00:22:16](#) In my fucking bag [inaudible 00:22:16].

Video: Male: [00:22:18](#) Okay ma'am I'll just try to get you out of here as quickly as I can, okay? [inaudible 00:22:20]. Do you want me to call you an ambulance?

Video: Female: [00:22:20](#) No, I don't want you to call ma an ambulance! That's an insult.

Video: Male: [00:23:07](#) Okay, I'm just, I'm just wondering, you look like you might be having a panic attack [crosstalk 00:23:07].

Video: Female: [00:23:07](#) I don't want you to call me an ambulance. I want you to call [crosstalk 00:23:07].

Video: Male: [00:23:07](#) Do you have your drivers [inaudible 00:23:07]. Okay. [inaudible 00:23:07] I'm [inaudible 00:23:07].

Video: Female: [00:23:09](#) Can you call Justice and tell her that she's gonna be late to [inaudible 00:23:09]? Can you call the middle school and let them know that my daughter is ...

Video: Male: [00:23:09](#) No, I'm not.

Video: Female: [00:23:35](#) Okay. I love you. I'm not seeing my driver's license. I have a driver's license [inaudible 00:23:35] but I'm not seeing it.

Video: Male: [00:23:37](#) I see, do you [inaudible 00:23:37] on your driver's license?

Video: Female: [00:23:37](#) No, I don't.

Video: Male: [00:23:40](#) Okay, you can [crosstalk 00:23:40].

Video: Female: [00:23:40](#) Are you making a call?

Video: Male: [00:23:48](#) No ma'am. [Crosstalk 00:23:49]. Okay. Reg is expired, do you have the new one?

Video: Female: [00:24:03](#) I don't see it in here. [inaudible 00:24:03] right now.

Video: Male: [00:24:06](#) Okay, just checking [inaudible 00:24:06].

Video: Female: [00:29:00](#) I just [inaudible 00:29:00] from the other lot.

Video: Male: [00:29:03](#) [inaudible 00:29:03] will you just put that back in your car, ma'am? I saw [inaudible 00:29:07] you didn't need to keep running from me.

Video: Female: [00:29:09](#) I want you to know that I [crosstalk 00:29:11].

Video: Male: [00:29:12](#) Okay, are, are you sure you're okay to drive, ma'am?

Video: Female: [00:29:15](#) I'm okay to drive, my child is at home and she has work today.

Video: Male: [00:29:18](#) Okay.

Video: Female: [00:29:20](#) And she's [inaudible 00:29:20].

Video: Male: [00:29:21](#) Okay well I'll, I'll get this done as quick as possible, okay ma'am? Here's your driver's license and [inaudible 00:29:25] it's [inaudible 00:29:26] the regi- uh, the registration and the insurance part, okay? Ma'am I want you to [inaudible 00:29:33] have a, uh, [inaudible 00:29:34] insurance card in your possession, okay? What you're gonna do is that's a, a mandatory court appearance because what they need to do is make sure that you have insurance on the date and time that you were stopped. Okay, the only thing they're going to do is just check [inaudible 00:29:46]. The ticket's already [inaudible 00:29:50].

Video: Female: [00:29:49](#) That doesn't make any sense.

Video: Male: [00:29:49](#) Okay.

Video: Female: [00:29:50](#) I just got finished telling you, because for me to have to go to court, for me to have to go to court, and now you want me to go to court, I didn't want to go to court, I have insurance, he can [inaudible 00:29:50].

Video: Male: [00:29:49](#) Okay ma'am the ticket's already written, I can't void [inaudible 00:30:06]. That's fine, you're more than welcome to do that ma'am.

Video: Female: [00:30:11](#) [crosstalk 00:30:11] cop. [inaudible 00:30:12].

Video: Male: [00:30:12](#) Okay, ma'am if, if you have any other questions reference the court date, maybe you can't make it, just call the [inaudible 00:30:19] court administrator, they'll work with you as far as getting another date for you, okay ma'am? Do you have any questions for me ma'am?

Video: Female: [00:30:22](#) I don't have any questions.

Video: Male: [00:30:22](#) All right ma'am, drive safe.

Video: Female: [00:30:22](#) You too.

Stephanie: [00:30:50](#) I mean the film just kind of like [inaudible 00:30:50].

Walter: [00:31:16](#) Specifically in regard to paragraph E of [inaudible 00:31:20] as the video tape shows on the first verbal exchange with Officer Forbes Miss Lawson Muhammad identified herself as a member of the school board. By evoking a public position as a member of the board of education it is my contingent that Miss Lawson Muhammad attempted to influence a public employee of the municipality and to discharge it [inaudible 00:31:47].

Adam: [00:31:47](#) [inaudible 00:31:47] I just wanted to sort of interject, I'm not sure if Mr. Fields is testifying [inaudible 00:31:50] arguments [inaudible 00:31:51] circa at this point if he's just arguing that it's not appropriate that [inaudible 00:31:55] given testimony [inaudible 00:31:57].

Speaker ONE: [00:31:58](#) He's giving testimony to the tape, I guess, as to, as he sees that.

PART 1 OF 5 ENDS [00:32:04]

Speaker ONE: [00:32:00](#) The ... the tape, I guess has to ... as he sees that, it would be up to the commission then to determine whether that is a ... a true account or not. And then the statements that you're going to be probably giving us later dealing with the authenticity or not authenticity will all be taken into consideration by this commission.

Walter: [00:32:26](#) This, I believe, was a private action. It is solely for the purpose of a personal gain to sway the officer and evade receiving a traffic summons, thus compromising the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education, as well as the local educational authority of the municipality for which the officer is employed. This was evident in the correspondence of the trustees of the village of South Orange, the employer of the officer, to the Board of Education, expressing, and I quote, "Great concerns over Miss Lawson-Muhammad's conduct during the traffic stop."

Walter: [00:32:59](#) Miss Lawson-Muhammad further engaged in a private action in violation of the statute by referring to a relationship with Miss Sheena Collum, the village president, and referencing that individual by first name with the officer. Miss Lawson-Muhammad told the officer twice that quote quote she was calling Sheena. The first incident was after she asked the officer if he was a Maplewood or South Orange police officer and he identified himself as a South Orange police officer. Upon hearing that the officer was indeed from the South Orange Police Department, Miss Lawson-Muhammad purposely dropped the name of an elected official, with the intent of warning the officer that Miss Lawson-Muhammad's political connections would overrule the officer.

Walter: [00:33:39](#) By suggesting she was going to call Sheena, Miss Lawson-Muhammad attempted to intimidate the officer by using a name of a publicly elected executive of the municipality that employs the officer. This also compromised the integrity of the Village of South Orange by inferring that an elected official of the municipality would fix the incident to the advantage of Miss Lawson-Muhammad due to a personal or political connection. It prompted Miss Collum to publicly state otherwise. Miss Lawson-Muhammad further engaged in a private action in violation of the statute when she asked the officer if he could call her daughter's school because the traffic stop would make her late for park testing.

Walter: [00:34:20](#) This was a third attempt by Miss Lawson-Muhammad to use her position as a school board member for personal benefit during

the exchange with the officer. It must be noted that the officer determined Miss Lawson-Muhammad was speeding, traveling in excess of 12 miles over the speed limit and that she acknowledged the violation. At no time did the officer attempt to intimidate Miss Lawson-Muhammad, or behave in a way that could be deemed or construed as offensive, threatening or disrespectful toward her. At all times, he was even tempered, even when Miss Lawson-Muhammad used an expletive when the officer offered to summon medical care, when he thought Miss Lawson-Muhammad might be in emotional distress.

Walter: [00:35:00](#) In regard to paragraph F of the code of conduct, respondent Miss Lawson-Muhammad sought to use her position as a school board member for personal gains by attempting to influence a police officer's charge of his sworn duties to avoid being held accountable for her traffic violation. On being issued a summons by the officer, Miss Lawson-Muhammad suggested she could not do what is required of any citizen when ticketed for a traffic violation, to go to court to address the matter.

Walter: [00:35:31](#) Miss Lawson-Muhammad did invoke the first name of the president of South Orange Village. Again, attempting to use her position to infer, for personal gain, that a political connection would circumvent the summons. This was done after the officer made clear that once a summons is written, it could not be revoked by the officer. For the record, it should be noted that Miss Lawson-Muhammad was not in possession of a valid insurance card and could not produce a physical copy, although she had communicated with her husband who offered to send a photographic image of the card. In addition, after being issued the summons, Miss Lawson-Muhammad referred to the officer's superior as "your skinhead captain" and suggested she would call the chief of police. It was only by virtue of her self identification as a school board member that creates the impetus to use her position for personal gain, the avoidance of a summons after violating a municipal statute.

Walter: [00:36:27](#) Her private action as a citizen, invoking her elected role on the school board, compromised the integrity of the elected position and the relationship with the Village of South Orange, when she attempted to use a political connection with that executive, or that means of power, to intimidate an employee of the village.

Walter: [00:36:49](#) It matters not to me when Miss Lawson-Muhammad issued an apology to officer Horst and whether that apology was private or public. What I believe is most relevant is whether Miss Lawson-Muhammad attempted to use her position as an

elected member of the South Orange Maplewood School district to influence a police officer and evade a traffic summons. Finally, this is not the first incident in our state with the ethics of a public official has been called into question for behavior when engaging in ... with a law enforcement officer.

- Speaker 3: [00:37:21](#) Just my objective, I'm not sure what relevance, you know, another matter may have to the case that we're here for today. And again, if, you know ... and the Sanford Commission, uh, is going to allow Mr Fields to talk, and obviously assert arguments as well. I don't know if it's necessarily appropriate during his testimony if he wants to reserve that for, for closing arguments, but this should be limited to, you know, his testimony and what personal knowledge, if ... if any, Mr. Fields has with regard to the incident.
- Speaker ONE: [00:37:48](#) Just try to stay-
- Walter: [00:37:49](#) I will wait for my closing argument.
- Speaker ONE: [00:37:51](#) Thank you. Thank you.
- Walter: [00:37:55](#) So, this matter involving Miss Lawson-Muhammad is now before the School Ethics Commission, because when the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education took no action and showed no interest in responding to concerns raised over her conduct. In fact, under the prohibited acts outlined for members of the South Orange Maplewood Board of Education, under the bylaws, it states the following:
- Walter: [00:38:17](#) No board member shall use or attempt to use his or her political position to secure unwarranted privileges, advantages, or employment for him or herself and members of his or her immediate family or others. Since the board of education did not hold a public hearing on that matter-
- Speaker ONE: [00:38:33](#) Just a second.
- Speaker 3: [00:38:35](#) So, to reassert the objection. I'll just say it again. The point that Mister Fields wants to offer testimony, I understand that, but it just seems that he is, you know, making arguments here and not providing any facts for the record in order for the commissioner to make a determination.
- Speaker ONE: [00:38:55](#) Unless you have somebody here to testify to that, that's your information.

Walter: [00:38:59](#) I'm closing this. Thank you.

Speaker ONE: [00:39:04](#) Okay. So, okay.

Speaker 4: [00:39:04](#) We have to do ... we have to do housekeeping. He needs to admit evidence. So, we gotta do introduction of video and a plea ...

Speaker ONE: [00:39:13](#) Yeah. Part of the process here would be, are you introducing the video as part of the evidence that you have?

Walter: [00:39:19](#) Yes.

Speaker ONE: [00:39:20](#) Okay. And that would be a ... B1 with the video that we watched.

Speaker 4: [00:39:29](#) Since it's introduced but not admitted [inaudible 00:39:32] decide.

Speaker ONE: [00:39:32](#) It's introduced. And we will then decide whether it's relevant or not in this case here.

Speaker 4: [00:39:37](#) This complaint? Anything else that the complainant is claiming?

Speaker ONE: [00:39:39](#) Is there anything else?

Walter: [00:39:43](#) No.

Speaker 4: [00:39:44](#) Well, this can be explained in the answer. So just ... Just for housekeeping, although you have filed documents with us, since this is a hearing, we're going to have you formally introduce them, so anything that you have filed with the commission that you want to introduce as evidence. So if you wanted to admit your complaint and any attachments, if you wanted to admit there was an allegation in the answer that your complaint was frivolous, if you wanted to admit your response to that, and any other correspondence with our office that you want to formally admit as evidence, you need to do that now.

Walter: [00:40:19](#) I would like to submit all of it.

Speaker 4: [00:40:20](#) Okay. Do you need to-

Speaker ONE: [00:40:23](#) What is all of it?

Speaker 4: [00:40:23](#) Yeah.

Walter: [00:40:23](#) The complaint.

Speaker 4: [00:40:23](#) Is this complainant C2?

Speaker 5: [00:40:23](#) Yep.

Walter: [00:40:30](#) The video.

Speaker ONE: [00:40:31](#) Do you have any objections to that.

Speaker 3: [00:40:36](#) I have an objection to any attachments for the complainant on the basis of hearsay if there's no ... I know Mr. Fields asserted either one or two copies of the same document, but it's a letter from the township, again, based on, you know, authenticity and hearsay in terms of nobody here from the district ... I mean from the township will be able to say that that's a true and accurate copy of the letter. I would suggest that [inaudible 00:41:00] obviously, if the allegation's that he's making his complaint, which is publicly filed, that's his complaint. But any documents that were attached to it without an anybody authenticating any letters and so forth, I would have an objection to that.

Speaker 4: [00:41:17](#) So, C1 is the video with ... We have this introduced, we have an objection as to authenticity. We have C2 as the complaint with an objection only as to the attachments as to authenticity. Is that correct?

Speaker 3: [00:41:30](#) Yes. Authenticity and hearsay, yes.

Speaker 4: [00:41:31](#) Okay. What about the answer?

Walter: [00:41:31](#) And the answer to respondent's-

Speaker 4: [00:41:38](#) Allegation.

Speaker 5: [00:41:38](#) Would that be C3?

Speaker 4: [00:41:41](#) Yeah. So C3, his evidence is the response to allegation of friv, but also just an answer to the complaint.

Speaker ONE: [00:41:49](#) And the answer to the complaint.

Speaker 4: [00:41:51](#) Yeah.

Walter: [00:41:53](#) And finally, the letter from South Orange, which was part of the original submission.

Speaker 4: [00:41:59](#) Okay. So, C3 is gonna be the answer to complaint. Do you have an objection to the answer that was filed on behalf of your client?

Speaker 3: [00:42:05](#) I have no objection to the answer.

Speaker 4: [00:42:05](#) Okay. And then, your response to frivolous ... Do you have any objection to Mr Fields response?

Speaker 3: [00:42:16](#) I have no objection.

Speaker ONE: [00:42:30](#) Okay. C3 and C4 are admitted, as the complaint, but not the attachment.

Speaker 4: [00:42:42](#) What is the letter you're referring to?

Walter: [00:42:44](#) The memorandum from the South Orange Village board of trustees to the school board president.

Speaker 4: [00:42:50](#) Was that attached to your complaint?

Walter: [00:42:51](#) That was attached to the original complaint, yes.

Speaker 4: [00:42:54](#) Do you have an objection ... Do you have an objection to all of the attachments or specific attachments in the complaint?

Speaker 3: [00:42:59](#) My understanding was that there was one document attached. Maybe if we have copies of the complaint, just for clarification of the record, just to make sure what Mr-

Speaker 4: [00:43:07](#) Sure.

Speaker 3: [00:43:08](#) To the extent that it is ... any letter, from the content, is there's an objection on the basis of authenticity, hearsay ...

Speaker 4: [00:44:31](#) Okay. So let's just clean this up a little bit. So your initial complaint-

Walter: [00:44:35](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:44:37](#) ... had ... It's a three page complaint ... sorry-

Walter: [00:44:41](#) Four.

Speaker 4: [00:44:41](#) ... four page complaint. It's sticking together. The fifth page is your certification.

Walter: [00:44:47](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:44:48](#) The attachment is what looks like a memo from the township of South Orange village to Miss Baker.

Walter: [00:44:54](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:44:54](#) And also, appended to that was the flash drive.

Walter: [00:44:57](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:44:57](#) Do you have all of those documents?

Speaker 3: [00:45:02](#) I have a copy of the letter. I didn't have the initial flash drive. I see that it was referenced in the complaint. But obviously the flash drive that we received, for purposes of hearing, is what my office has on the 21st of November.

Speaker 4: [00:45:15](#) Okay. But you have a copy of the memo from the township of South Village?

Speaker 3: [00:45:18](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:45:19](#) Okay, so do you have an objection to that memo as to authenticity again?

Speaker 3: [00:45:22](#) Yeah, and hearsay as well. Obviously, you know, that document is not ... it's just, Mr Fields ornate comment that it's from ... I'll check to somebody else on the board of education and neither of those individuals were here testifying as to that.

Speaker 4: [00:45:40](#) So, that would be C5. It's attached to the complaint. So, that would fall into C2 attachments. Then, you also separately submitted a revised certification to include the newspaper article.

Walter: [00:46:00](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:46:00](#) And you want to admit that as well?

Walter: [00:46:02](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:46:05](#) Do you have a copy of this?

Speaker 3: [00:46:08](#) I don't have that. And again, I think part of the issue and problems that we may be having here is when Mr. Fields was directed to submit all his evidence. At my office, we didn't

receive anything at all. We complied with the deadline. We submitted all our exhibits and I think it's unfair, you know, right now, and prejudicial for Mr. Fields to be introducing all this evidence when he didn't comply with the filing deadlines. The only thing that he submitted was, again, with the courtesy of the commission, to submit the video tape, which we received on the 21st.

- Speaker 3: [00:46:37](#) But we didn't receive any documentation prior to the hearing, with regard to young Mr Fields wanting to introduce, you know, the complaint, the answer, his response, the memorandum from the township, and now, again, a newspaper article. I don't have any of that. And it was never made ... We were never informed that was the intent. And, you know, in fairness for the hearing, that's what the purpose of the discovery rules are here. Again, we complied. You know, if we tried to introduce a document here that I didn't provide to Mr. Fields, you were never ever going to stand up and object, just like I'm doing now. Again, it's just prejudicial that these documents were not provided under the guidelines that were advanced by the commission, you know, if we were going to introduce ... have documents introduced that we weren't providing them.
- Walter: [00:47:28](#) I provided all of the documents, as I stated earlier, in the original submission. The commission received, counsel received what we responded.
- Speaker ONE: [00:47:38](#) So you're saying all the information that he's saying he didn't receive, you sent?
- Walter: [00:47:51](#) I sent it as part of the original complaint. It is noted on C4 with the attachments. I can't attest to what happened in counsel's office, but I provided both the commission and counsel copies.
- Speaker 3: [00:48:00](#) I can't speak as to what, if anything, those attachments or that supplemental piece was sent to my office or received. All I know is that along the lines, and I think it's documented in commission letters that there were certain things that were not provided directly to my office, in terms of like the witness list, so I'm not asserting that Mr. Fields didn't. I just don't have any record of receiving certain documents. And again, this would have all been rectified if, by the deadline, Mr. fields would have identified and produced what he is required to produce. He's the complainant. He has the burden of proof. And he knew that, by virtue of the letters from the commission, that he had to submit whatever evidence, whatever videos, whatever

documents that he wanted to introduce here today by a date certain. And he didn't do so.

Speaker 3: [00:48:45](#) And then even when he was given a second opportunity, again, the only thing that he submitted was the video which we got last week. And again, I know there's some discussion about a link that was sent to the commission. We didn't receive the link either. And I know we could reserve that discussion about the admissibility of the videos. So, I won't go off too far on that. But again, just the fact that we didn't receive his evidence by when we were supposed to, we're again, we're prejudiced here to respond in order to be able to respond to these allegations and without the benefit of the documents.

Speaker ONE: [00:49:18](#) Understanding your note there, you know, as a school ethics commission, we try to be fair and uh, ... and open minded to things. And uh, we also know that sometimes people come here without legal representation, that we try to give it a little bit leeway toward that. But the bottom line, when it's all said and done, we try to be fair and above board. And we have nothing into the game other than to try to find out what is the right course of action. If there are certain things that you object to, certainly you have the right to respond in kind. And we will then take that into consideration as well. I mean, the whole idea of a hearing like this is fairness and uh, we know that sometimes if you're coming in without representation, uh, sometimes the legal aspects of it are sometimes clouded.

Speaker ONE: [00:50:20](#) And we generally try to give a little bit more leeway in that regard. But the idea here is that we're trying to be fair with all concerned and listen to all the evidence that's presented. I would say that, uh, we would, uh, enter into that submission, but with the objections that you have raised.

Speaker 3: [00:50:50](#) Does Mr. Fields have additional copies of documents here today. Or would they be able to be provided? Because again, as I said here, I don't have a copy of that, the supplemental and the newspaper article. That's ... That's, I guess presumably which will be marked as exhibit C6.

Speaker ONE: [00:51:05](#) Is a newspaper article pretty much ... Isn't that public record or public-

Speaker 3: [00:51:10](#) I mean maybe. But-

Speaker ONE: [00:51:11](#) Provide. Sure. Sure.

Speaker 4: [00:51:13](#) Do you have a copy?

Walter: [00:51:13](#) I don't have a copy with me at this point. But I can provide one to him.

Speaker ONE: [00:51:18](#) And you may do that.

Speaker 4: [00:51:36](#) Okay. Just so I'm ... Just so I'm clear, so the 524-18 submission, which is merely just a revised certification attaching the newspaper article as an additional exhibit, your objection is to the newspaper article not to the revised certification, which is really just him saying that everything he's submitting is accurate. Are you ... Are you objecting to the whole document?

Speaker 3: [00:52:06](#) Again, without seeing the document, I'm just at a disadvantage, again, just not sure what the document is that he's trying to introduce, 'cause I'm not sure if my office received it or not. That's just part of the problem here.

Speaker ONE: [00:52:22](#) You have not seen the newspaper article?

Speaker 3: [00:52:24](#) I do not recall seeing that, that supplemental. I mean, I have in front of me an index of filings that we have put together in terms of you know, letters to and from the commission.

Walter: [00:52:32](#) Mr Sheriff, for the sake of moving forward, I will strike that as a submission.

Speaker 4: [00:52:32](#) Are you sure?

Walter: [00:52:32](#) Yes.

Speaker ONE: [00:52:50](#) You will strike that as evidence?

Walter: [00:52:51](#) Yes.

Speaker ONE: [00:52:51](#) And that was listed as ...

Speaker 4: [00:52:53](#) That was C5.

Speaker ONE: [00:52:55](#) C5 will be stricken from the record.

Speaker 4: [00:52:58](#) So, we have four exhibits. So, C1 is the video which has been introduced but not admitted because we have a reservation as to authenticity and hearsay. C2 is your ... your original complaint with attachments, and you're objecting again to the flash drive for the same reasons, authenticity and hearsay. C3 is

the answer to complaint that was filed by respondent. The answer also ... complaint contains an allegation of frivolous filing. C4 is Mr. Field's response to that allegation.

- Speaker ONE: [00:53:38](#) Okay. I move that we cross examine.
- Speaker 4: [00:53:43](#) I double.
- Speaker 3: [00:53:48](#) Mr. Fields. You had indicated that you've received this video that was played here this morning, anonymously ... anonymously, correct?
- Walter: [00:53:56](#) Correct.
- Speaker 3: [00:53:56](#) So you don't know who you received it from?
- Walter: [00:53:58](#) No, I do not.
- Speaker 3: [00:53:59](#) Okay. Did you make an open public record to act to the contrary?
- Walter: [00:54:01](#) No, I did not.
- Speaker 3: [00:54:03](#) Did you receive any verification or certification regarding the authenticity of the video that you've played here today?
- Walter: [00:54:11](#) No, I did not.
- Speaker 3: [00:54:12](#) Do you know, when you received it, if that was the complete and full video?
- Walter: [00:54:18](#) No, I do not.
- Speaker 3: [00:54:19](#) As you sit here today, do you know whether or not the video that was played here today was edited or modified in any way?
- Walter: [00:54:30](#) Would you restate that? Edited and modified before I received it or after I received it?
- Speaker 3: [00:54:36](#) Before you received it?
- Walter: [00:54:38](#) No, I do not.
- Speaker 3: [00:54:40](#) Did you not make any modifications to the video that was played here?
- Walter: [00:54:42](#) No. I did not.

Speaker 3: [00:54:45](#) Why did you not make an [inaudible 00:54:48] a copy of the video?

Walter: [00:54:50](#) By the time I received the video, it was made public the same day I initially posted it. It was made public by a local newspaper organization. It was in the public domain.

Speaker 3: [00:55:03](#) Were you present? You weren't present at the traffic stop, were you?

Walter: [00:55:06](#) No. I was not.

Speaker 3: [00:55:06](#) Okay. And you've never talked to a police officer Horst about the incident, have you?

Walter: [00:55:11](#) No. I have not.

Speaker 3: [00:55:13](#) And you've never talked to the police chief about the incident, have you?

Walter: [00:55:15](#) No. I have not.

Speaker 3: [00:55:17](#) And you've never talked to Miss Lawson-Muhammad about the incident, have you?

Walter: [00:55:20](#) No. I haven't.

Speaker 3: [00:55:23](#) And you've never talked to Sheila Collum about the incident, have you?

Walter: [00:55:27](#) No, I have not.

Speaker 3: [00:55:40](#) Is it accurate to say that the only information you have about the incident is what reportedly is on the video that you showed here today?

Walter: [00:55:48](#) What is on the video and what has been publicly reported in newspapers.

Speaker 3: [00:55:48](#) Nothing further.

Speaker ONE: [00:56:09](#) Commission members, anyone have any questions of Mr Fields? Anyone? Okay. The Floor is yours.

Speaker 3: [00:56:37](#) At this point, if the commissioners would be amenable, I'd like to make a motion to dismiss Mr. Fields' complaint here today. Obviously, the only evidence which ... which hasn't ... which has

been introduced but not admitted yet, was the video. Mr. Fields, you know, admitted that he has no personal knowledge outside of what the video shows. He never talked to the police officer, never talked to the police chief, never talked to Miss Muhammad, never spoke to, uh, the township president Sheena Collum, and has failed to ...

Speaker 3: [00:57:10](#) He has the burden here, uh, this morning, to prove that there were violations of the school ethics act. And based on what was submitted here this morning, we respectfully submit that Mr. Fields has not met his burden. There's no evidence submitted, uh, that the ... in terms of what was set forth in the November 15th School Ethics Commission letter that they're ... that Miss Lawson Muhammad's conduct during the traffic stop, violated subsection E or F of, uh, 18A:12-24.1

Speaker 3: [00:57:40](#) There's no evidence submitted that, um, there was a private action that compromised the board. Um, there is no evidence that Miss Lawson Muhammad tried to use her position as a board member for any personal gain. There's no evidence that she tried to use her partisan political connections to somehow, again, have a summons erased or something that is alleged by Mr. Fields. And again, Mr. Fields has the burden here today to come forth with evidence to substantiate those allegations. And based on ... you know, obviously Mr Fields has made arguments here. But in terms of what facts are necessary to in order to determine whether or not there was a violation of the school ethics act, have not been demonstrated here today. Again, no body from the Township is here to testify, no ... the police officer is not here.

Speaker 3: [00:58:26](#) The police chief isn't here. It's just simply Mr. Fields making arguments about what is, you know, on the video tape that again is not a part of this case yet or not admitted into evidence. So, for those reasons, we respectfully submit that the commission should dismiss, at this point, the complaint in its entirety. Thank you.

Speaker 4: [00:58:49](#) So then, we need to adjourn. So then, ask if he can respond to the motion.

Speaker ONE: [00:58:49](#) Do you have a response to the motion?

Walter: [00:58:55](#) I filed this complaint as a private citizen of the township of Maplewood. I acknowledge that I did not communicate directly with any parties that counsel listed, but I believe it is within my right as a citizen to file this complaint. I believe the video shows

sufficient evidence of the statement that I've made, and the facts in this case. And I hope that the commission will consider it all and not dismiss it. I believe this is an important question of the public consideration. Thank you.

Speaker ONE: [00:59:27](#) All right. We're going to go into closed session. We'll have to have a motion for that. And then, we'll ask you if you can retard to outside the room. And then, we will deliberate upon that. So, at this time ...

Speaker 6: [00:59:40](#) I'd like to make a motion to go to executive session. Is that good?

Speaker ONE: [00:59:45](#) Do we have a second?

Speaker 7: [00:59:45](#) Second.

Speaker 4: [00:59:46](#) Michael Carucci?

Michael Caruci: [00:59:47](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:59:48](#) Michael Collins? Mark Finkelstein?

Mark Finkelstei: [00:59:50](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:59:51](#) Daniel Kaplan?

Daniel Kaplan: [00:59:52](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:59:52](#) Dennis Roberts?

Dennis Roberts: [00:59:53](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:59:54](#) Jude Tanella?

Jude Tanella: [00:59:54](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:59:55](#) Richard Tomko?

Richard Tomko: [00:59:55](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:59:56](#) Robert Bender?

Robert Bender: [00:59:57](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [00:59:57](#) Thank you.

Speaker 4: [01:00:00](#) Yes please.

Speaker ONE: [01:00:01](#) We can now open the door.

Speaker 4: [01:00:02](#) And the time is 11:10.

Speaker 5: [01:00:02](#) I have 11:09.

Speaker ONE: [01:00:02](#) We're really not worried-

Speaker 5: [01:00:03](#) No. Whatever. [inaudible 01:00:03] submitted. What time do you ... we'll end it?

Speaker ONE: [01:00:04](#) 11:09.

Speaker 5: [01:00:13](#) Okay. They're just a-

Speaker ONE: [01:00:23](#) Motion to Deny, Respondent's motion to dismiss the complaint.

Speaker 4: [01:00:29](#) Right. Through public session.

Speaker ONE: [01:00:34](#) We're public, at 11:10. Okay. We're back in public session. It's 11:10. And the question was a dismissal based upon the information that's received and this commission has discussed that matter.

Speaker 6: [01:01:10](#) I'm going to motion to deny the respondent's motion to dismiss the complaint.

Speaker ONE: [01:01:13](#) Do we have a second?

Speaker 7: [01:01:16](#) Second.

Speaker ONE: [01:01:17](#) Roll call please.

Speaker 4: [01:01:19](#) Mike Carucci?

Michael Caruci: [01:01:20](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [01:01:20](#) Mark Finkelstein?

Mark Finkelstei: [01:01:22](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [01:01:22](#) Daniel Kaplan?

Daniel Kaplan: [01:01:23](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [01:01:23](#) Dennis Roberts?

Dennis Roberts: [01:01:24](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [01:01:24](#) Jude Tanella?

Dennis Roberts: [01:01:25](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [01:01:26](#) Richard Tomko?

Richard Tomko: [01:01:27](#) Yes.

Speaker 4: [01:01:27](#) Robert Bender?

Richard Tomko: [01:01:28](#) Yes.

Speaker ONE: [01:01:29](#) Okay. Okay. Um.

Speaker 3: [01:01:42](#) Uh, Good morning.

Speaker ONE: [01:01:43](#) Good morning.

Speaker 3: [01:01:45](#) There's no dispute that Miss Lawson-Muhammad was, um, pulled over by a South Orange police officer on April 27, 2018 for a moving violation. But you're going to hear from Miss Lawson-Muhammad that it was a really hectic morning. She was driving her oldest daughter to school when she was pulled over by the police officer. Um, she'll explain that she became anxious because her daughter who was with her in the car was going to be late to school. Um, and she'll also explain that, um, she also had to get home to take her, um, other daughter to school who was scheduled to take the park exam that morning. And she was also concerned that her daughter was going to be late for the exam. Um, we all know that being pulled over by a police officer is a stressful and scary experience. There's no denying that. You hear, you know, lights flashing, sirens on, and sometimes you're not exactly sure why you were pulled over and you're not sure what the officer's gonna say, or what the officer is gonna do. Um, and during the course of this traffic stop, Miss Lawson's anxiety, you know, understandably increased. Um, although she was explaining ... she'll explain that the police officer, you know, is polite and patient with her.

Speaker 3: [01:02:54](#) Um, she'll also explain that she was fearful based on her real life experiences. Um, she truly felt overwhelmed under the entirety of the circumstances. And you'll hear that from her this morning. Um, and she should not be faulted for the feelings

that she experienced during this April 27th, um, traffic stop. Now unfortunately, you know, her reactions were, as she has subsequently described them, were irrational. But you're going to hear from her that reactions during this traffic stop were out of character. She's a respected member of the community, a respected board member. And this was just simply, you know, a blip on the screen based on all the circumstances that were happening, and it does not support her true character. And she apologized for what happened that morning.

Speaker 3: [01:03:38](#) She issued an apology to the police officer and personally met with the police chief after the incident. And the fact remains that Miss Lawson-Muhammad, she's a dedicated, uh, school board member and a dedicated member of the community, and a dedicated, uh, parent. Miss Lawson did nothing that rises to the level of a school ethics act violation on April 27th, 2018, when she announced her name-

PART 2 OF 5 ENDS [01:04:04]

Speaker 9: [01:04:00](#) On April 27th 2018. Um, when she announced her name and her position uh, on the board of education and speaking with the police officer, that was not done to attain any probature or personal gain. Um, she just wanted to let the police officer know that she was a member of the community. She wasn't a threat. Um, and then as you saw, and you'll hear from her, what it is she was explaining that what was going on that morning in terms of trying to get both of her children to school. An- And the park exam. Mohammed did also not seek to use any partisan political connections to circumvent the issue, of o- uh, of a, of a summon. Um, and she did not take any private action that, that morning which compromised the board. Um, again as such, it's respectfully something that after listen to the, the, the respondent's case, you'll agree that the commission should dismiss uh, the complain in its entirety with prejudice. Thank you.

Speaker 10: [01:04:55](#) Yeah.

Speaker 9: [01:05:01](#) We may begin with uh, a witness. If I could have a Miss Lawson, uh, Mohammad.

Speaker 10: [01:05:06](#) [inaudible 01:05:06].

Speaker 11: [01:05:05](#) Can you just bring the mic a little closer please?

Stephanie L. M.: [01:05:07](#) Sure.

Speaker 11: [01:05:08](#) Thank you.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:05:09](#) Is that better?

Speaker 11: [01:05:10](#) Yes. Thank you.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:05:11](#) Okay.

Speaker 12: [01:05:11](#) Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

Stephanie L. M.: [01:05:17](#) I do. Good morning. My name is [Stephanie 01:05:22] Lawson Mohammad. I'm a resident of South Orange, New Jersey. Um, I have been on the school board for five years. I have a over 20 year career um, in wireless industry and in IT consulting. Um, I am not one that people would call typically anxious. Um, and I have built a career in an environment as an African American woman in technology where I'm often the only in a room, and have worked to high level um, of leadership um, in organizations.

Speaker 9: [01:06:01](#) If I could ask, how many uh, terms have you uh, served on the board of education?

Stephanie L. M.: [01:06:04](#) I uh, in my second-

Speaker 9: [01:06:04](#) Yeah.

Speaker 10: [01:06:04](#) Yeah.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:06:04](#) ... term?

Speaker 11: [01:06:04](#) I'm sorry. Ca- can you bring-

Stephanie L. M.: [01:06:04](#) Oh.

Speaker 11: [01:06:05](#) ... [crosstalk 01:06:05] a little closer to both [crosstalk 01:06:07]-

Stephanie L. M.: [01:06:06](#) Yes.

Speaker 11: [01:06:07](#) [inaudible 01:06:07].

Stephanie L. M.: [01:06:07](#) Is this better?

Speaker 9: [01:06:08](#) You pull that-

Stephanie L. M.: [01:06:09](#) [crosstalk 01:06:09].

Speaker 11: [01:06:08](#) Yeah.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:06:09](#) Okay.

Speaker 9: [01:06:09](#) Just watch that. Yep. I just asked Miss Lawson Mohammad if she could explain how, how many terms and how long she has served on the South Orange Wood, uh, South Orange Maplewood Board of Education.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:06:19](#) So I'm in my second term. Sm, at the point that this incident happened, I was also in my second term um, on the board.

Speaker 9: [01:06:29](#) And, and why did you first run for a seat on the uh, board of education?

Stephanie L. M.: [01:06:33](#) Um, I've always been a person that has been highly engaged in the community. Um, and education in particular. So we upon moving to South Orange in 2011-

Speaker 13: [01:06:47](#) [inaudible 01:06:47].

Speaker 9: [01:06:47](#) Wha-

Speaker 13: [01:06:47](#) We have a right to object.

Speaker 9: [01:06:51](#) Well, on what grounds?

Speaker 13: [01:06:55](#) On the grounds that [inaudible 01:06:56] matter.

Speaker 9: [01:06:57](#) Well, I think it's getting an understand of the, that she's been involved with the board of education uh, for a period of time. So it's just some history.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:07:06](#) So we moved back to New Jersey um, after six years away in Indiana in 2011. Um, I started attending board members meetings. I learned about equity issues in our schools. And wanted to be part of ensuring that our schools were serving all children. Um, I ran for the Board of Ed in a space where I was relatively new to South Orange, and was able to um, win that election. And by the time I ran for my second term, I actually received more votes than any person have ever received in an election in South Orange Maplewood, because of my record of what I've done in that district in, on the school board of raising issues of equity um, to support our students.

Speaker 13: [01:07:53](#) Lemme ask you about uh, April 27 2018. Um, do you re- Do you recall that day?

Stephanie L. M.: [01:07:59](#) I do recall that day. Um, that morning it, it was during the week of park testing. My older daughter is done with park, even though she was only a sophomore. So she was needing to go to school later, because they were doing park testing in the morning. So the day before and the week before, she was going in after my younger daughter who actually is at the middle school, and does have park testing. Um, and needed to be there on time.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:08:25](#) Um, Jordan de- ran down to me during kind of a meditative moment that I take in the morning, and was upset because she didn't realize she actually had to be at school at that time. And she came in and said, "Mom, I have to get to school." Um, I immediate ... I- It immediately created a lot of anxiety for me, because that child hates to be late. Um, and, and so her anxiety around being late gets into me. And it meant that I was going to have to go to the high school and make my way back in time to get Justice, and traffic during the morning rush hour with schools makes that very challenging. So I always prefer to take them both, and not have to come back through traffic to get um, Justice to school.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:09:10](#) So upon finding that out, I jump in the car with Jordan um, and race out. And that therein m- mindlessly racing out to get my daughter to school. Um, and I actually went a different route that I normally go. Um, and that's ultimately when I was pulled over. Um, upon being pulled over ... I mean, I, I actually would like to just give a little context of what had happened in the preceding weeks that lead to the state of mind that I was in upon being pulled over.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:09:46](#) Um, on April 11th a girlfriend in our community, one of my closest friends, her 14 year old son on the first day of Spring Break was downtown getting lunch on a bicycle. And a fire chief saw him. Was concerned that he looked suspicious. Called into the police and asked them to come check him out. And around three to four police cars came upon him. Um, had him on a curb. Ultimately had him in the back of the police car at some point. Um, and released him. Um, but the experience that that led to for him, and given that this is one of my closest friends, I was counseling her on her dealings with both the police chief and with Miss [Column 01:10:39] on their interaction, and what kind of understanding came out of that.

- Stephanie L. M.: [01:10:46](#) So that's one piece of information that I think is important for you to understand of my state of mind around what was happening within the police department in our district. And in counseling her around those meetings, there were things that were said in giving excuses as to why this happen that left a very sour taste in my mouth with regard to um, the interactions that were happening between her and the police chief. Um, on August 14th you may recall that was when uh, the Starbucks coffee police interaction happened in Philadelphia.
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:11:27](#) I say that only to say that the week of the incident, both on April 24th and 25th, there were in the news, there were incidents of police interaction with black women that were very heart-wrenching for me and impactful. So in Alabama when a black woman in a waffle shop was wrestled to the ground with her breasts exposed on the cold floor, and my Facebook feed was full of those types of things and my friends reacting to it, that created a level ang- anxiety for me around what was happening in our country as to how someone at a waffle house could end up on a floor with police interaction.
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:12:16](#) Also on the 25th, the news was reported about five black women that were golfing in Pennsylvania. They were golfing too slow, the police were called. That police interaction wasn't negative, but the ne- the negative interaction was with the owners of that golf course, and then being dismissed for golfing too slow. On that m- Tuesday, I work in IT consulting. I had to take a trip up to New Haven, Connecticut. Normal trip. I go to Newark. I jump on the train. And I get into New Haven.
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:12:51](#) When I got off the train, for some reason there was a lot of police officers on the platform. So there were probably three to four police officers on the platform. And that struck me ... I'd gone up before for another trip, and it struck me as odd as there were so many police on the platform. It created a level ang- anxiety like, "What's going on?" And as I entered, I had to go down and underground, and back up. There more police in the station. And for some reason in my head, I was like, "I have to make sure they don't think I'm doing anything. And I just need to go to the bathroom over here. But let me walk straight, and just go to the bathroom so that I don't look suspicious."
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:13:31](#) Now, I already told you, I have a 20 year career in IT consulting. I'm dressed in business attire. I'm headed to go to a client meeting. It makes no rational sense that I would feel like I needed to seem undangerous. I can't explain as to why my brain took me to that space. But that's the space that I was in. Um,

and, and this is all on that Tuesday before this event happened on Friday. I recall that evening, taking the train home after 5 o'clock. And a friend of mine um, [Tiarre Jones 01:14:05], she's an author, had posted something on Facebook about her frustration about all of the violence against black women. And I literally responded and s- and said, "I can't ... " E- About what the experience that happened to me in New Haven that day, and how angry I was that it happened.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:14:21](#) I was angry with myself that I felt that way. Just didn't make sense. And I, I don't like to feel powerless and scared. And I was mad at myself for feeling that way. So on that morning on April 27th, on a Friday when typically my husband's around on Friday. But he was down in um, Alabama. And now I am rushing out, not with my you know, with a level of anxiety of trying to get my kids to school on time. And I get pulled over by the officer. Again, I immediately, you can hear in my explanation first, whenever I ... I, I've only been stopped by cops maybe two or three times.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:15:05](#) Every single time I burst into tears. Tha- It may be irrational, but that is my, my standard reaction, (laughs), to getting pulled by a cop. I burst into tears. And you hear that as soon as he comes up to the car, I'm in tears. Um, but then I immediately need to make sure I'm an okay person. Same kind of reaction that I had had in New Haven earlier that week. And that is when I say, "My name is Stephanie Lawson Mohammad. I'm a member of the school board. And I'm a member of this community." I needed him to know that I was not a dangerous person. Maybe irrational. But that was what was in my head in that moment.

Speaker 9: [01:15:41](#) And did, did you say that in any way to get out of a ticket or a summons?

Stephanie L. M.: [01:15:45](#) Not at all. I needed to credentialize myself for him so that he knew I was not some dangerous black woman. And nothing would happen bad. It was about a bad outcome, not about a ticket. About some dangerous violent outcome. Me wanting to ensure that he knew that I was a good person.

Speaker 9: [01:16:06](#) Now that, that morning was there anybody in your vehicle with you when you were pulled over by the police officer?

Stephanie L. M.: [01:16:11](#) My daughter. Um, 15 at the time, was in the car with me. Yes.

Speaker 9: [01:16:17](#) And, and what happened after you uh, were, were pulled over with regard to your daughter? Did she end up going to school?

- Stephanie L. M.: [01:16:22](#) Yeah. I mean, it might e- My very first response to him when he pulled me over was, "Can she get out and walk?" 'Cause my, I was uh, maybe five, six blocks away from the school. And in my brain I was like, "Wow. If I could just get her to school, and then you could give me the ticket down here in this parking lot." That was what was in my head. Um, I, so I immediately asked if she could get out. And I come back to that pretty quickly, 'cause I know that she's anxious around being late. And you can see from the video that she ran away, 'cause she didn't wanna be late to school.
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:16:53](#) Um, I also was concerned that Justice was waiting for me at home. That she needed to be at PARK. That I needed to make sure that it got communicated to her that, "Mom will be there when I can." And so I had asked Jordan to call um, her sister to let her know. And then completely irrationally, I say, "Can you call the school?" It, it didn't make any sense to ask the officer to call the school. I could've called the school. I had my phone. But that was what came out of my mouth in that moment. Because I wanted to make sure that people knew that she was coming, and that she wouldn't have any penalties for being alter for the PARK test. Because they ... I'm on the school board. I understand how important PARK is. Um, we know that the ki-kids need to be there on time, so it's not disruptive to the test.
- Speaker 9: [01:17:42](#) A- As you know, part of the allegation is that, Mister [Filtas 01:17:44] alleges that in terms of you identifying yourself as a member of the board of education, and then a member of a community, it was somehow for, to get uh, benefits. So I just wanna ask you and break it down. When you did identify yourself as a member of the South Orange uh, Maplewood Board of Education, was that um, said in order to attempt to get out of a ticket?
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:18:02](#) Absolutely not. Uh, the school board has a no kind of ... We're not even related to the town. We're a two towns school board. I have no jurisdiction over police, over the town in any way. It was me s- credentializing myself as, "This is who I am."
- Speaker 9: [01:18:20](#) Okay. And also, when you had identified yourself as a member of the community, was that to in any way get out of a ticket or a summons?
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:18:27](#) It was to let him know that I live in this community. I care about this community.

Speaker 9: [01:18:32](#) And did it ultimately uh, come to your attention as to why you were pulled over by the police officer?

Stephanie L. M.: [01:18:36](#) It uh, it did. And immediately I say, "I'm s- " I ... Even before he tells me I was speeding, I say, "I'm sorry if I was speeding. I didn't know I was speeding." So when he lets me know, and you can hear me say immediately, "I'm sorry." Because uh, I don't ... Didn't go rush outta the house to speed. I should've been thinking straighter. I shouldn't have run out of the house flustered. It's the position that I was in, and I was sorry that I was speeding.

Speaker 9: [01:19:05](#) And, and as this is occurring in terms of um, allowing your daughter to get out of the car and walk to school, could you tell us you know, how you were feeling at the time? What was going through your mind?

Stephanie L. M.: [01:19:15](#) I mean, so the anxiousness for her to get out. The anxiousness to get back. And, and then that my standard tears around a police uh, getting pulled over by the police, that interaction is clear. I think what confuses people a lot is then the swing to my reaction to him when he asked to call an ambulance, and how, why that was offensive to me. I did- I didn't need an ambulance. I didn't need to be put on a stretcher. I was, I was overreacting. I was anxious. I just needed someone to say, "I'm not gonna hurt you." (laughs). Or, "You're fine. This is just a normal police stop. You need to just take a deep breath and calm down." I'm not saying he should've said that, but if someone had said ... If that had just happen, I coulda taken a deep breath and calm down.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:20:08](#) But I didn't need an ambulance. And that's when you see the pendulum between, and as I said when I got on that train coming home from New Haven, I was angry at myself for feeling that way. Um, I mean I was just like, "I don't need an ambulance. That's not ... Now you're insulting me." I felt at that moment that he was mocking my feelings. That, that ... The thought that I needed an ambulance in that moment was an extreme for me. And that's why you heard my reaction the way it was.

Speaker 9: [01:20:40](#) Did, did you say anything to the officer that you were scared of cops because they hurt black people?

Stephanie L. M.: [01:20:45](#) I did. And, and that's all wrapped around as I just told you, what my Facebook feed looked like that week. And you only can ... Whether it's your Facebook feed, or it's Google Search News, as an African American experiencing this, this is the reality,

especially the sheer. There were incident after incident, after incident of what happens when black people are just being black people in the world. Barbecue in the park. S- Sitting in a dorm in their college campus. All of these incidents where the police were called, and the police have a choice of whether they're going to say, "You know what? This isn't a police incident," like they did in, in Pennsylvania when they left and didn't take action against the five black women that were golfing too slow.

- Stephanie L. M.: [01:21:33](#) Or where they actually stay and try to take someone away, like the people in the, the dorm um, that lived in that dorm. Or that had every right to be studying in that dorm. But police are called on African Americans very often just for being black. And that feed, that constant feed. And then when it goes wrong is a daily reminder to those of us that are paying attention to that, that it is not necessarily a safe space out there for African Americans.
- Speaker 9: [01:22:11](#) And at any time, did you ask uh, the, the police officer to uh, call your daughter's school about her being late to the PARK exam?
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:22:17](#) I did ask the officer if he could call the school and let them know. And he said he could not. Which I understood. Didn't make sense.
- Speaker 9: [01:22:29](#) Why di- Why did you ask the police officer if he could [crosstalk 01:22:30]-
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:22:30](#) 'Cause I wanted my, my ... Why didn't I ask him [crosstalk 01:22:33]-
- Speaker 9: [01:22:33](#) No. Why did you, why did you ask him?
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:22:34](#) Because I wanted the school to know that she was late, 'cause I in that moment, I was like, "This ... " And the time ticker today reminded me it was 08:05. The bell rings at like 08:13. She, there was no way I was getting back home in time to get her there on school. And they're supposed to be on time for PARK.
- Speaker 9: [01:23:05](#) There's uh, some uh, discussion from Mi- from Mister Field and uh, on the video about [Sheena 01:23:10]. Who is uh, Sheena?
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:23:12](#) Sheena [Cullum 01:23:13] is our Village President. Um, I've known her since my first ... Since she ran up for office, knowing her just as a citizen. And then I ran for board after her. Um, she has had ... We've had interaction around her expressing um, support for me and my work on the board. And I've interacted

with her during her elections. But she's also a person that is very concerned about our community, and, and often asks for feedback um, of what's going on. And so in the moment of feeling that ... In the moment of feeling that being pulled over, and the anxiety that I felt over being pulled over, I said, "I will call Sheena right now." I, because ... And, and if he had said he was a Maplewood cop, I would've said, "I'm gonna call Vic right now." 'Cause I had anxiety. And that it was a bad interaction for me. And that was what came out of my mouth. I did not pick up the phone. I did not call her. But my instinct was, "I want to talk to her." (laughs). Because I don't like the way this feels.

- Speaker 9: [01:24:42](#) How many times did you call Sheena about being pulled over?
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:24:44](#) I did not.
- Speaker 9: [01:24:45](#) At any time did you call uh, Sheena about upon your receipt of a ticket or summons?
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:24:50](#) I did not.
- Speaker 9: [01:24:58](#) A- And when you, when you said that you were gonna call Sheena, could you de- describe your demeanor and your feelings at the time?
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:25:05](#) So there were two instances in which I said that I would call Sheena. The first one as I said, was largely around me not liking the way that this interaction was feeling. And that I was saying, "I'm going to, to ... " I'm, I wanted to t- call her and let her know what was going on. Um, the second time I made the statement, it wasn't just Sheena. It was Sheena and Chief [Croll 01:25:29]. And that was largely around the fact that I ha- I, I had not shown a valid insurance. By that time I was on the phone with my husband, crying hysterically. My husband's like, "Steph, I can just give you a, a, an image of your insurance." And in my brain I'm like, "Well, this isn't fair. Why should I have ... I, I have it. It's right here. Why should I have to go to court? I can show you right here." I did not know that there was some law that once you issue a ticket, you can't issue it anymore. I now know that.
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:26:03](#) Um, but so without knowing that is a law, it seemed unfair. And I said, "I'm gonna contact ... I'm gonna call Sheena. And the ... " We all know the epitaph output in front the chief's name. Um, but that was me saying, "I'm calling your leadership, because this isn't fair. I shouldn't have to have this ticket. I have my insurance. I can show you." Um, I do just wanna clarify around, even though it's you know, the epitaph I put in front of the

chief's name, relates back to as I said, the April 11th incident. It has nothing to do ... I- It, at whereas there was a lot of discussion around it being a racial term, and when you hear, "Skinhead." It's generally a class of people that are, could be known as racist.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:26:57](#) I, I said that term in that completely irrational space of me asking the police officer to call my kid's school, and me being upset that he asked for an ambulance. The, the term, "Skinhead," for him there was the frustration over how he had treated my friend around the incident around her son. And his, he has a bald head with a little fluff of hair in the middle. And I, when I saw him in my head to say his name, that's ... I threw that word in front of it. I don't think he's a racist individual. I don't think he's ... I have no thought that he's remotely associated with the Skinheads. Um, but I was frustrated with him over that, even though he and I had never had a conversation about it. And I in my frustration, put an epitaph in front of his name.

Speaker 9: [01:27:52](#) A- And just going back to when, when you s- mentioned that you were gonna call Sheena. Was it in any way for you to get out of a, a ticket or a summons?

Stephanie L. M.: [01:28:04](#) Not at all. It was to express that I felt like something was unfair. And that if someone can show an insurance card, that why should they have to go to court?

Speaker 9: [01:28:14](#) (clears throat). An- And ultimately, what came of the uh, the two tickets that you received that morning?

Stephanie L. M.: [01:28:21](#) So, (sighs), I received a date on the ticket. Um, I needed to go to the court house on the date of that ticket. There was a lot of fear around that, given how public this had become, and my video had over half a billion views. I was concerned that there would be protest at the court house. Um, there were none. I got there. Um, I checked in. The judge for my trial was Clarence [Barry Austin 01:28:56], who I know and who has been in my home. And so they said I had to go home. And they were going to push the date, because I needed to be in front of a judge that I did not know. Um, so I returned on the later date. And the, I went in with the prosecutor. Turns out I used to do community service in Newark um, when I had young children, with the prosecutor.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:29:21](#) He went inside to make sure that he could actually ... Um, I guess the right word might be, adjudicate the case. And so we

sat. He got permission. Um, in looking at my record, given that I had no previous stops on my record at all in New Jersey. Um, he bumped the the- traffic, the speeding ticket down such that it didn't give me points. And um, I showed him my insurance card. Um, I went in with the other people with the judge. Um, the judge commended my on my amazingly clean driving record. And was a very nice man. And it was actually not such a horrible day in being in court. Um ...

- Speaker 9: [01:30:11](#) A- And, and during the, the traffic stop did you use uh, your position as a board member for you know, to influence the police officer?
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:30:20](#) In no way, shape or form. I was relatively rude to that police officer. And uh, relative is not even ... I was rude. I was rude. Um, there's nothing about what I did that day that I feel good about. I left that day in great despair over how I had treated the whole situation. Um, and if you're trying to gain favor with someone, you don't treat them in a way like that. That's, that's not how you gain favor.
- Speaker 9: [01:30:51](#) Did you attempt to use any uh, political or partisan connections to, to get out of the ticket?
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:30:55](#) Absolutely not.
- Speaker 9: [01:30:56](#) Now after the uh, incident um, did you have an occasion to issue any apologies or speak with any, the police officer or the police chief?
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:31:05](#) So after the incident, um, I had no idea that the incident had been recorded. That's not something in my brain that that could've happened. Um, I actually received a phone call from Sheena on the Sunday after the incident happened, letting me know that she had seen the video. Um, and she wanted to talk. Um, she and I talked. She expressed that she knew that wasn't me. And that she couldn't you know, fathom what I had been going through for that to happen. Um, we talked about the whole incident. And I expressed the desire to apologize to both Chief Croll and Officer [Herse 01:31:52]. We discussed that in her opinion, it was best for me to apologize to Chief Croll, because he had, was, was definitely very hurt by my comment. And it affected him deeply. And so she started an attempt to s- get a meeting between me and the chief.
- Stephanie L. M.: [01:32:17](#) This was within the, two to three days of the incident. She worked that week trying to get a meeting. She contacted me

the next day and let me know that there was a Board of Trustee member that had gotten ahold of the tape, that was basically talking to the other Board of Trustee member. And that wanted a public apology. Um, and that they were gonna be viewing the tape as a board. I s- asked for m- to be able to attend that meeting so that I could give context. I had still not seen the video. To give context as to what happened um, in the incident.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:32:59](#) Um, I was told that the next meeting would happen within a week. But then I was contacted. I found out that they actually held a special meeting that wa- that I would not ... And, they ar- They went ahead and held a special meeting faster, and watched the video, and made the decision to notify the school board without allowing me to be there and give any kind of statement as to what occurred. Um, and from that, I can't remember what your question was. (laughs).

Speaker 9: [01:33:34](#) I mean, a- a- at any point did you issue any uh, written-

Stephanie L. M.: [01:33:37](#) Right.

Speaker 9: [01:33:37](#) ... apology?

Stephanie L. M.: [01:33:37](#) Okay.

Speaker 9: [01:33:37](#) [crosstalk 01:33:37]-

Stephanie L. M.: [01:33:38](#) I'm trying to get to the apology. So at that point, I um, was also in conversation with the Community Coalition on Race. It is an organization in which I am a member supporting from the school board to the Community Coalition on Race. Um, they've been working in the community for over 20 years on issues of immigration. Um, and they have a relationship with the police department as well. So they were trying to help negotiate a sit down between me and the chief. And then it was determined um, that chief ... Not chief. Pastor Terry Richardson of First Baptist Church who, I don't attend that church, but I have gone occasionally. And um, have a positive relationship with him.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:34:26](#) He also has a positive relationship with Chief Croll, that he would likely be the best person to be able to facilitate a meeting between us. He attempted for over a week to facilitate a meeting. The meeting didn't actually happen until everything became public. And on the morning that things were, that I found out that things were becoming public, um, he met with him that morning. And the Chief said that he was almost ready

to meet with me. And it wasn't until the next morning that he had agreed that we could sit down um, and meet.

Stephanie L. M.: [01:35:05](#) So I met with the Chief on the morning of May 17th. And I issue my apology, my formal apology after meeting with him. For me it was important that the person that was harmed in the interaction, have a private apology and discussion, more so than me saving face with the public and issuing some statement that would apologize to him publicly. Um, so my uh, public apology was issued on May 17th, and sent to all the news outlets that at that point had been barraging the school board for some public statement. Um, that was the first um, apology that was issued. And that has been-

Speaker 9: [01:35:59](#) And in the exhibits where you submitted, is this the uh, May 17th 2018-

PART 3 OF 5 ENDS [01:36:04]

Male Speaker 1: [01:36:00](#) In the exhibits we submitted, is this the, uh, May 17th, 2018, uh, for immediate release document. Is that the statement that you were just referring to?

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:36:09](#) That is. Yes.

Male Speaker 1: [01:36:09](#) And this was submitted after you had met with our Chief Kroll and personally apologized?

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:36:16](#) It was. And it was submitted to the school board, um, that the South Orange Maplewood School District communication lead, in order to be able to send it out to the myriad news outlets that had requested some comment, um, because I had news trucks at my front door, um, and it was more important for me to have a statement instead of interviews.

Male Speaker 1: [01:36:46](#) And was there a subsequent statement that you also issued? Is that the one that's May 21st, 2018?

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:36:52](#) That's correct. So, that ... on May 21st, by that point, um, school board members were ... Obviously, everyone was aware of what happened. They were- they wanted to understand what- what happened and so there was a executive session called in order to discuss it, but because we had to open in public and there ended up being a whole other issue going on with a non-renewal of a principal, that we got a full house of people there to speak, um, that I needed to be prepared to make a public statement in the horseshoe because this was my first public

appearance from when the incident happened. And so I issued this verbally, um, on May 22nd during that meeting, and then I- it was published, um, both in, um, the Village Green and, um, I think it's called Tap, something like that, Tap Into or something like that.

Male Speaker 1: [01:37:53](#) Also, as part of our exhibits there's a May 29th, 2018 letter. Um, could you tell us what- what that letter is?

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:38:02](#) So, this is a letter ... The- the initial ... The very first statements that I heard about that were again- that were making it a public incident, that were publishing video, were on Facebook. They were be ... and letters were being sent in the name of the Black Parent Workshop in which Mr. Fields is the chairman of that organization.

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:38:29](#) I'm a black parent. I have lots of friends that are black parents, and so the fact that there's an organization called Black Parent Workshop, um, was disturbing to many people in which it made it seem as though the black parents of South Orange and Maplewood were against Stephanie Lawson-Mohammed over this horrific traffic stop, but that this would be taken to the level that it had become. And so there was a group of people that then wrote a letter on behalf of themselves as black parents of South Orange Maplewood, um, that signed. They- they only wanted people that lived in South Orange Maplewood. Um, they did it quickly. They- they were like, "It's not about how many people we have on this letter. We just need that the school board understands that all black parents are not in support of what's happening to Stephanie."

Male Speaker 1: [01:39:26](#) In the exhibits as well, there's a, uh, article that says, "SOMA Justice Demands Investigation and Rejects Call for Lawson-Mohammed Resignation." Could you tell us what- what that is?

Male Speaker 6: [01:39:38](#) Your voice is dropping.

Male Speaker 1: [01:39:38](#) Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I turned away from the microphone. Uh, the next exhibit in the- the binder is entitled, "SOMA Justice Demands Investigation and Rejects Call for Lawson-Mohammed Resignation," could you flip to that-

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:39:51](#) Yeah.

Male Speaker 1: [01:39:52](#) ... document and tell us what that is?

- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:39:53](#) So, SOMA Justice is an organization, um, that has formed over the past couple of years within our communities, um. One of their first acts was putting up Black Lives Matter signs during Black History Month in our towns. Um, upon ... The whole community knew what was happening to me. And there were many people who were outraged as to what was happening both in public and on Facebook and everywhere and the national attention that this was drawing. And so, SOMA Justice specifically started this petition and posted it online. They came to a school board meeting and read this in public record. And then they also shared it with the Village Green. Um, and it was published online on the Village Green as well.
- Male Speaker 1: [01:40:56](#) The next exhibit as well, it looks like it's an email, Melissa Renny, May [inaudible 01:41:02] 2018. Can you tell us what that document is and if it's the same letter with regard to SOMA Justice?
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:41:09](#) Yes. This is the letter that they ultimately sent to the board of ed email, um, and in which they published all of the names. It's the same wording that was in the previous document but they published the names and the dates signed of ... I think they list 300 individuals on this PDF and they shared here.
- Male Speaker 1: [01:41:32](#) And then we have, uh, the next exhibit in the- in the binder. It's a letter, founding members of P-A-R-E-S has issued a response. Can you tell us what that document is?
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:41:46](#) So PARES, um, is an organization in our community that formed over the past year around issues around equity and race, um, in the schools. And upon hearing and seeing what was happening they not only came out to school board meetings and ... our school board meeting and read this letter, um, in the public record before our board meeting. But they also then published it and sent it to the board. But this version of it is the version that was published by the Village Green which is our local ... this is our local, um, news, so they cover South Orange Maplewood specifically.
- Male Speaker 1: [01:42:32](#) And the very last document in the exhibit binder, um, again, entitled letter SOMA Justice demands investigation. Could you tell us what that document is as well?
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:42:45](#) So back to SOMA Justice. As people found out how this ultimately became public and that there was a version of this video that was placed in anonymously in Mr. Field's mailbox. There was a great concern over what was going on in our town

in that, A, police interaction video would be shared so frivolously without any open record request and that there should be an understanding, an investigation of what transpired, and how the township allowed for this public- this- this video to be released outside of a formal open request. And so SOMA Justice ... The mic. Can you guys hear me because it's going in and out?

- Male Speaker 2: [01:43:47](#) Yes. Back it up a little.
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:43:48](#) Okay. Back up?
- Male Speaker 2: [01:43:49](#) That's good.
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:43:50](#) Okay. So SOMA Justice issued this as a demand for an investigation and a rejection of the request for me to resign from the position.
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:44:04](#) (silence)
- Male Speaker 1: [01:44:38](#) Is there anything else that you just wanted to add, um, to the commission at this point after the incident or anything else that you just wanted to add?
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:44:45](#) Y-yeah, the other thing I want to add is that although it was reported in the Village Green that it was an unanimous vote to send this to the Board of Education, um, Sheena was in conversation with me throughout about what was happening and she told me that it was not unanimous, that she actually had voted for it not to be sent. But again, this is people just reading what ... that was never corrected in the public record. Um, the impact of this on our community, on me personally, on Chief Kroll, um, and the officer, I mean, it ... There is ...
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:45:39](#) I had a very bad day on April 27th when I was stopped by an officer. My reaction was something that I would never have wanted anyone to see and my own daughter had to see it in the car. When she came home, she said, "Mommy, you were not nice to that officer and you owe him an apology." And I knew that. I am not proud of what I did that day. I don't try to justify what I did that day. But I'm a black woman in America with the Facebook feed that lets me know how I am perceived and what risk exists beyond any door no matter what kind of suit I have on, what kind of letters I have behind my name, what kind of community member that I am. I never would have wanted anything like this to cause harm either to my community, to my family, to a school district that I volunteer as an elected official

to serve. And I would never wish this on anyone. I often think we all have our horrible moments and there's so many people that have come to me and said, "If my worst moment was caught on film, there before God go I." And my worst moment was caught on film. And I've had to pay the price for it. But I know ultimately because I am a spiritual person that God has something in this, that God has something he intends to come of this. And so all I can do is what I did, is apologize and move forward because I am still committed to being a force of change and a force of good. And I will not allow one bad moment to not- to take away my opportunity to me of service in any way, shape, or form that I can.

- Male Speaker 1: [01:48:10](#) Thank you. I have nothing further.
- Male Speaker 5: [01:48:15](#) Do you have a re-direct?
- Male Speaker 1: [01:48:16](#) Cross?
- Male Speaker 5: [01:48:16](#) Cross.
- Male Speaker 3: [01:48:20](#) Yes. [inaudible 01:48:23]. Have you received a traffic summons in the past?
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:48:34](#) I have.
- Male Speaker 3: [01:48:35](#) Have you gone to court for that?
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:48:35](#) I have not.
- Male Speaker 3: [01:48:36](#) Have any of your children had any encounters with Maplewood or South Orange or any police department for that matter?
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:48:44](#) Yes.
- Male Speaker 3: [01:48:46](#) When did that happen?
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:48:48](#) So at the risk of me having to talk about my children's formal interaction with the police and that not necessarily having any kind of ... I'm entering into the public record things that might not be of the public record. So I will just say that my son has had interaction with the very police officer that stopped me. And upon hearing his name, my son said, "Mom, that's the same cop."
- Male Speaker 3: [01:49:24](#) Did the officer say anything to you that you deemed a threat?

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:49:24](#) He did not say anything to me that I deemed a threat. But he had a tattoo of a skull on his arm that when he ... and you saw he had short sleeves ... that when he stood with his arms on the window, the skull was in my face. And I don't like skulls. Skulls give me anxiety. I refuse to buy clothing with skulls. I never bought my child anything with a skull on it. And for the entirety of the interaction, his hands were on the window, and the skull was in my face. And that was aggressive even though he did not say anything and he probably had no idea that the skull was aggressive towards me. But that absolutely impacted my state of mind at the time.

Male Speaker 3: [01:50:15](#) Why did you state that you could not go to court?

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:50:19](#) I've never been to court. When I think about court, the last time I got a ticket was before we moved to Indiana and I pondered that I actually wasn't doing the thing that I got stopped for. But the thought of going to court and the time that it would take, was not worth the time of just paying the ticket. And so I ended up paying the ticket. So and that was 10 to 12 years before this incident. So I had made in my head that going to court was this horrible time-consuming, terrible thing. And as I said, my time in the court room and the judge was funny and nice and it actually was not a horrible time in the court. But that was my state of mind on going to court. I've never been in court and I did not want to go to court.

Male Speaker 3: [01:51:18](#) Your knowledge [inaudible 01:51:19] Village of South Orange initiated an investigation into the release of the video tape?

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:51:25](#) I was told my Sheena that they would absolutely determine how this tape was distributed without an open request which is against ... it has to be against their bylaws, their processes. I- I was not ... I did not pursue that. That was not something that I felt was important for me to be part of and so I don't have any knowledge of where that landed. But I was told that it would happen because that it was obvious that the tape had been ... because it was even stated by you, Mr. Fields, that you received it anonymously which and- and no open request had been made at that point. So t-the accusation that it was an illegal, um, distribution is seemingly valid.

Male Speaker 3: [01:52:26](#) Have you read anything publicly that that investigation has taken place and a determination was made?

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:52:32](#) I have not.

Male Speaker 3: [01:52:35](#) [inaudible 01:52:35] trustee of the Village of South Orange or the Village executive?

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:52:39](#) My understanding is she's the Village president.

Male Speaker 3: [01:52:41](#) To your knowledge that the memorandum that was cited coming from this Village of South Orange was that a memorandum from the trustees or the Village executive?

Male Speaker 1: [01:52:52](#) I have just objection your Honor, it's outside the scope of direct and also to document t-that was [inaudible 01:52:57] Mr. Fields is referring to the document that was attached to his complaint.

Male Speaker 3: [01:53:03](#) Respondent raised this document in her testimony.

Male Speaker 5: [01:53:06](#) We'll just go on just a little bit and see where this travels. But if it goes to [inaudible 01:53:12]-

Male Speaker 3: [01:53:12](#) [inaudible 01:53:12].

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:53:11](#) Would you please repeat the question?

Male Speaker 3: [01:53:14](#) If I can remember the question ... I'll [inaudible 01:53:23]. That's all.

Male Speaker 5: [01:53:26](#) I have a question here. Uh ...

Female Speaker: [01:53:28](#) [inaudible 01:53:28] see if he wants to redirect [inaudible 01:53:30].

Male Speaker 5: [01:53:32](#) Pardon? Do you have any redirect?

Male Speaker 1: [01:53:33](#) No, no.

Male Speaker 5: [01:53:35](#) Question I have here, this is the first time we've seen the- this film here. And I know that we're dealing with issues of authenticity and has it been edited or whatever, um. What we see and what you saw here, is that the first time you say that as well?

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:53:54](#) No, the first time I saw the video was about 12 hours before the rest of the world saw the video. I did not see the video in advance, I think, um, Mr. Fields saw the video before I saw the video. Honestly, when I found that there was a video, I thought it was a camera that was on his person. So I honestly thought it was a video of my face. And as you could hear me crying in that, I'm not pretty when I cry. I look crazy. And so the thought that

there was a video of my face with me crying, because I know- I know how I felt and I know how I was in that moment, when I ultimately did see the video and saw that it was not my face, and then I actually heard what I said and that I literally said ...

- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:54:45](#) That was a moment where I literally said everything that was in my head. So instead of you just thinking, "I'm scared of cops because they hurt black people," I literally said it. I mean I said, "I'm freaking out right now." I told the police officer every single thing that was in my head. There was nothing in my head that did not come out of my mouth. And so I was actually upon seeing it more relieved that it- that I was clear, that I was scared, and I was anxious and it was a bad day.
- Male Speaker 5: [01:55:21](#) Well, the question I have here is that what we saw here is that pretty much an accurate representation of what took place at that time? I know there was some issues about was it edited or not, you know. All we saw- all we saw here from a certain time to a certain time, didn't see anything skip or anything. That's what I was looking specifically for. But is that pretty much an accurate ... from at least from a general point of view what took place?
- Male Speaker 1: [01:55:52](#) I mean it's hard to say, again, specifically without knowing the video I think if you're asking Ms. Lawson to ... generally, if certain statements were made and with regard to traffic stuff it's hard to ... I mean, [inaudible 01:56:08] verbatim of everything on the tape. Um, was said or if there's anything missing or- or ...
- Male Speaker 4: [01:56:16](#) I think what he asked was-
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:56:18](#) [inaudible 01:56:18].
- Male Speaker 4: [01:56:17](#) ... does it accurately portray what happened?
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:56:22](#) Is it the essence of what happened?
- Male Speaker 4: [01:56:23](#) Right, if you're able to ...
- Lawson-Muhammad: [01:56:25](#) I mean it is the essence of what happened. I mean, again, it happened to me, um. The way you remember something versus what you see w-when you didn't know [inaudible 01:56:38]. But yes, I hear my ... I can hear my voice in that video and literally every time I have to see it, I feel exactly the same way that I felt at that moment.

Male Speaker 4: [01:56:50](#) Okay. Any other questions?

Male Speaker 5: [01:56:56](#) When did you ...

Male Speaker 4: [01:56:56](#) Go ahead.

Male Speaker 6: [01:56:56](#) So one thing that was acknowledged whether you believe the video or not is you did say you were a board member.

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:57:01](#) I did.

Male Speaker 6: [01:57:02](#) Right. And that's the only reason that this is really before this commission because if there wasn't any mention of a board, we wouldn't even have jurisdiction. So the concern aside from whether it was meant to influence is, does this represent your own individual views, take away the stress of the moment, or the views of the whole board? And so that ... before you answer that, that's a concern. Normally, um, and I appreciate the background as to why you qualified and indicated you were a board member in order to give credibility to your standing. But normally, if you indicate you're a board member, there is a [inaudible 01:57:39] assumption that you are expressing the views of the board. And absent a disclaimer that says, "These are my views only." Now you're not necessarily going to sit there with a police officer and say, "These are my views only." But I did notice that in your apology, you don't specifically indicate that whatever was said, was said by me and does not represent the views of the board. So I'd just like your reaction.

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:58:01](#) So my understanding about representing the views of the board is that an individual making a statement cannot represent the views of the board.

Male Speaker 6: [01:58:08](#) Right.

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:58:09](#) You can't represent the views of the board without a consensus vote that has, uh, at least five votes of yes. So me making a statement that I'm a member of a school board and then saying anything is not in any way representing the view of the school board because there's no consensus vote on anything that I'm saying in my car, in the moment, that I'm having a bad moment around a traffic stop. So nothing that I stated had anything to do with anything that school board members have any jurisdiction about.

Male Speaker 6: [01:58:43](#) Okay. So you've been to school board ethics training, right? Yes.

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:58:47](#) Sure.

Male Speaker 6: [01:58:47](#) Okay.

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:58:48](#) It's been I will say I ... I'm in my fifth term as a board member. But I have had ethics training, yes.

Male Speaker 6: [01:58:56](#) So if you set aside whether there was any action, wrote an article in the newspaper and said, "Stephanie Lawson-Muhammad, member of the school board," absent you saying that these are my views and not the representation from the school board, that is a violation of the school ethics [inaudible 01:59:13].

Lawson-Muhammad: [01:59:14](#) And that would be me writing an article in public and publishing something. This was an interaction in my car with a singular police officer around a traffic stop. I- I guess that like there's nothing happening in that traffic stop that had anything to do with the school board. I said I was a member of the school board so that officer Hurst would know I'm Stephanie Lawson-Muhammad. My brain was ... as I told you about New Haven. I needed him to know that I wasn't a dangerous person. I'm a member of the- I'm a member of the school board. I'm a member of this community. I'm not some crazy person speeding through town. I- I'm taking my kid to school. Please don't hurt me.

Male Speaker 6: [02:00:01](#) I appreciate that. And it's said that it's come to that. And you both acknowledge that. What I'm saying is that even after it became public and now it's in the public domain. And now it's Stephanie Lawson-Muhammad school board member. Why didn't you think it was necessary in your public apology or your private discussions to indicate that these are not the views of the board?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:00:20](#) So I guess, for me to make an apology over action that I took, it was never expressed to me, " Stephanie, you should also add that this is not the view of the board." Honestly, no one suggested that I should put that in my apology because it was an apology from me about my- my action as an individual citizen. And that's the whole thing that was confusing about it in general. This has ... And just to say when I requested for the insurance to cover my legal covering, guess what they said? No, because this has nothing to do with being on the school board. This has nothing to do with the school board. So the insurance carrier won't even cover it because it has nothing to do with being on the school board.

Male Speaker 6: [02:01:14](#) Any other questions from the commission?

Male Speaker 2: [02:01:17](#) You said the first time you viewed the video was 12 hours before it was released. Did Sheena give you the video-

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:01:22](#) No.

Male Speaker 2: [02:01:22](#) Or just the board of ed?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:01:23](#) So because the- my understanding was that the board of trustees was going to release the video to Elizabeth Baker, they released it to the board of ed office with a letter to Elizabeth Baker. And I wanted to see the video before I met with Chief Kroll. And also at that point it was becoming like other school board members were finding out. And I was like, "I need to see what this looks like because I have no idea what it is." And I called the school board office and asked if I could come view the video. So I went to the, um, our board secretary's office. And he gave me the thumb drive to watch the video privately.

Male Speaker 2: [02:02:17](#) So the thumb drive was given from the Village, from the town to your board president, to your board secretary?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:02:23](#) T-they- they provided a thumb drive. It actually, it was a thumb drive that hadn't been altered. It had my daughter's face in it. It had my license plate. It had no, you know, blurring.

Male Speaker 2: [02:02:38](#) Personalization, right?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:02:39](#) Right. And my other daughter, Justice's name, is in the video. So all of those elements were in that video that they issued. And, yes, so that's the video that I saw.

Male Speaker 2: [02:02:52](#) So the town gave it to your board of ed to view? And then subsequently it was released 12 hours later?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:02:58](#) My board of ed did not release the video.

Male Speaker 2: [02:03:01](#) But they had it- they viewed it 12- with you 12 hours before?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:03:05](#) I viewed it 12 hours before t-the ... What was released, was released on Facebook. My understanding was that the first release of the video was by Mr. Fields on Facebook. Um, and then new agencies started picking it up and asking for open requests.

Male Speaker 2: [02:03:23](#) Did your board as a board ever view it together?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:03:25](#) No, because the- it is not a board issue.

Male Speaker 2: [02:03:32](#) Thank you.

Male Speaker 5: [02:03:34](#) Question here. You said you viewed it before, um, before seeing it here today. Other than the blurring of the license plate and the, um, uh, your- your- your child's, uh, name or ... not a name, but her face and so on, is that the same as we viewed here today?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:03:55](#) So I- it's a ... How many minutes is that video? I think it's at least eight. I don't know how many minutes the video is. The nature of what I saw today is isn't fundamentally different to the fact that counsel is just simply asking, "Has this been altered?" I can't attest to if that is exactly what if you had [inaudible 02:04:17] for the video you would get that exact same video. But as I already said the essence of the incident, right? And- and there's plenty of versions of it out on the internet. Some that pause the whole thing and just hear voices, some that have my kid's face unblurred. Um, it's been viewed over a million times.

Male Speaker 5: [02:04:41](#) Okay. Yes, [inaudible 02:04:43] questions.

Male Speaker 4: [02:04:44](#) Um, you testified earlier that, um, when you're pulled over by police, um, you normally cry. Is that why you were crying that day because you were pulled over by the police?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:05:05](#) I was crying immediately because I was pulled over by the police.

Male Speaker 4: [02:05:08](#) Okay.

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:05:09](#) You hear me crying as soon as he comes up to the car.

Male Speaker 4: [02:05:13](#) Okay. Were you crying before he came up to the car?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:05:14](#) Absolutely. What? No, before ... Yes, as soon I got pulled over, I was crying.

Male Speaker 4: [02:05:20](#) And did you think when you were being pulled over that you were being pulled over because you were speeding?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:05:27](#) That- that's actually what I said. I said, " Was I speeding? I didn't know I was speeding." So.

Male Speaker 4: [02:05:34](#) But the thought occurred in your mind as you're being pulled over that you-

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:05:37](#) Ab-absolutely.

Male Speaker 4: [02:05:38](#) ... might be being pulled over because you were speeding?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:05:40](#) Right. I wasn't ... my head was not in my space of let's be- let's make sure I'm driving 25 miles an hour. This is where I am.

Male Speaker 4: [02:05:50](#) When was the first time that you actually saw the officer during the stop as a person?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:05:58](#) As a person when he was standing in front of my window and he put his arms on my window.

Male Speaker 4: [02:06:02](#) Okay. And, um, uh, you said that you were going to call Sheena, correct?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:06:11](#) Correct.

Male Speaker 4: [02:06:12](#) You said that twice?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:06:13](#) I said it twice.

Male Speaker 4: [02:06:14](#) Okay. You were referring to Sheena Collum [inaudible 02:06:19]?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:06:19](#) The Village president, yes.

Male Speaker 4: [02:06:20](#) Of South Orange?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:06:21](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Male Speaker 4: [02:06:22](#) Okay. Was she a friend of yours?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:06:23](#) I wouldn't call her a friend. We've never gone out for drinks. We talk about, um, school issues, town issues.

Male Speaker 4: [02:06:34](#) Okay. Um, and did you, um, you testified earlier that you said you were going to call Ms. Collum because you felt it was unfair what was happening to you?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:06:50](#) I said I felt uncomfortable about what was happening to me, the unfairness was the second part of getting the ticket in that I could show him my insurance.

Male Speaker 4: [02:07:01](#) Right. So I was going to complete the [crosstalk 02:07:03].

Male Speaker 4: [02:07:03](#) No, it's okay. But I was just simply saying you thought it was unfair or now uncomfortable and, uh, that you should be able to show your insurance card, I believe you said. Was that why you said you were going to call Sheena?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:07:18](#) In the second incident when I said it, not just Sheena, but Chief Kroll as well, both of them, which Chief Kroll I have no- I've never had a conversation with him before. I said both of their names, um, that I felt not knowing that there's literally a law that once a ticket's printed you can't take it back. I didn't know that. It seemed unfair to me. It seemed unfair to me that you shouldn't be able to show your insurance and not have to get a ticket.

Male Speaker 4: [02:07:49](#) Okay. I just want to make sure I understand. So the first time you said you were going to call Sheena, why did you say it?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:07:57](#) I was uncomfortable with the interaction that was happening and how I was feeling.

Male Speaker 4: [02:08:02](#) Okay. What made you uncomfortable?

PART 4 OF 5 ENDS [02:08:04]

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:08:00](#) And how I was feeling.

Speaker 14: [02:08:02](#) What made you uncomfortable?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:08:07](#) I had a police officer standing at my window who, when I was expressing anxiety, asked me if he could call an ambulance for me. Which I felt was mocking my feelings. I did not need an ambulance. There's nothing that an ambulance could've done in that moment. All I needed to do was be reassured that I was not going to be hurt, that he was not a cop that hurts black people and that everything was okay, this was a simple traffic stop. Take some deep breaths, I'll be right back.

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:08:44](#) I- I- as- as straight as he was and as on the script that he was, there was never a moment that he said anything reassuring to me. So in a moment where you have a woman crying immediately, he never said anything of- and um, one thing I forgot to mention, because if you note, when he came back to the car, I'm bawling, I am bawling hysterically and I'm on the phone with my husband. Here I have not given him a license, I've given him a- an invalid insurance card, I have no idea what he's doing back there. He could be calling for backup. I have no idea. I am- I am- I'm an illegal driver at this point. I have no idea.

I did- I wasn't looking behind me to even see what was happening. I held my arm out that window, you can watch that video and see how long I held it and you see my arm dropping because I am scared that I haven't given him the things that he needs to know that I'm okay. And he could be calling for backup right now. I have no idea what is going to happen to me.

Speaker 14: [02:09:55](#) A- when you first said you were going to call Sheena, did you think you were going ... that it was possible you were going to receive a ticket for speeding or some other traffic offense?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:10:09](#) I- I wasn't thinking about a ticket at all. I- I mean, honestly, I- I- the fact that if- if- what I complained about at the end wasn't a speeding ticket, I was speeding. What I complained about was the insurance, which actually has no fee. All it means is you go to court, you show them you have insurance and then you leave. Because I have insurance. I- I pay my insurance, I pay it on time. I have insurance. I wasn't complaining about having to pay for a speeding ticket. That wasn't a concern for me. I was speeding. I deserved a speeding ticket.

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:10:42](#) The whole ... most of that interaction is a cloudy muddle that involves a state of mind that I normally wouldn't have. If I was stopped by a cop today, I'm not going to have that same reaction. Because one of the things that I've learned is I have triggers. And when I- he- when I s- I- I remember when you hear people talking about their triggers, and people joke about that, they're like, "Oh, they're weak people." And I had never been one that knew I had triggers. I have triggers that I now know that I need to de- breathe deeply and I need to get my head right and I need to think and keep my head straight.

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:11:24](#) So, for me, personally, I now have a much better understanding of what's happening to me and to be able to manage that so that I do not allow my triggers to take me to space that is unhealthy.

Speaker 14: [02:11:41](#) And the second time you said you were going to call Sheena, why did you say it the second time? [inaudible 02:11:48]

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:11:47](#) The second time I said it, it was about getting a ticket because I- I was surprised I was getting two tickets. Um, and that when I ... my husband said, "Wait a minute, Steph, just tell him that you- I can show you the insurance right now." And I said, "Hey, he can show you the insurance right now." And he said, "I'm sorry, but you- I can't. I've issued the ticket." And as I said, that's not fair, that's not right. I don't want to go to court. That's why I

said, I'm gonna ... not just Sheena, I said, let's just be clear, the second time ... I was going to let his leadership know that I felt this was unfair that someone can show insurance and still have to go to court to again show insurance.

- Lawson-Muhammad: [02:12:35](#) In my head, that was perfectly logical to be upset about and I wanted to express that that did not make sense to me and I was upset.
- Speaker 14: [02:12:44](#) You just mentioned um, talking to your husband. Were you on the phone with him? [crosstalk 02:12:48]
- Lawson-Muhammad: [02:12:48](#) You can hear in the video. So he was sitting on a plane on a runway in Alabama and my daughter called him on her run to school to say, "Mom's freaking out in the car. She's been stopped by the police." And he called me.
- Speaker 14: [02:13:02](#) Okay. Um, and did you, subsequent to the traffic stop, speak to Sheena?
- Lawson-Muhammad: [02:13:10](#) Subsequent meaning after?
- Speaker 14: [02:13:12](#) Yes.
- Lawson-Muhammad: [02:13:12](#) She called me, th- this was in my testimony, she called me on Sunday, she told me that she had seen the video and that she knew that that was not me. And we talked about what happened. We talked ... I mean, I did- I talked about that in my testimony. Do you want me to ...
- Speaker 14: [02:13:31](#) I- I just want to make sure I understand it. Was that the first time you and her spoke about the incident?
- Lawson-Muhammad: [02:13:37](#) It was.
- Speaker 14: [02:13:38](#) Okay. And did you speak to any other elected officials about the incident, elected officials?
- Lawson-Muhammad: [02:13:46](#) The ... any other elected ... did I speak [crosstalk 02:13:49] to any-
- Speaker 14: [02:13:50](#) Besides- besides board members of your own?
- Lawson-Muhammad: [02:13:53](#) Besides school board members?
- Speaker 14: [02:13:54](#) Correct. Any other elected officials-

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:13:57](#) No other elected officials contacted me. And I didn't contact anybody.

Speaker 14: [02:14:02](#) Okay. Um, are you affiliated with SOMA Justice in any way?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:14:07](#) There's ... no, I'm- no I am on their Facebook page, I'm on the PARES Facebook page.

Speaker 14: [02:14:12](#) Okay.

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:14:12](#) Um, I have attended- I attended a Trayvon rally, march that was one of the first events they had. I got up to the mic and spoke.

Speaker 14: [02:14:19](#) Okay. Do you know its leaders?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:14:22](#) I do.

Speaker 14: [02:14:22](#) Okay. Um, you- you said in a statement that was designated as exhibit two, I believe, in your- in your attorney's submission that you, quote, "You fell short of the standards to which I hold myself." Um, do you still believe that to be true?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:14:48](#) Yes, absolutely. I would never ... if- if I was playing out, Stephanie, this is what you're going to do today, it would not be to insult a police officer, curse, act in front of my child, lose- have triggers allow me to enter a space that no one would ever want to be in.

Speaker 14: [02:15:06](#) And- and finally, um, you- you- you testified that your daughter told you that you owe the officer an apology. Did you apologize to the officer directly?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:15:20](#) I apologized to the officer in the letter. It- in talking to all of the people that were supporting me around this, um, it- the thought was because of the- the specific um, name around the chief, that it was important for me to meet directly with him. Um, but there was some concern over me meeting directly with the officer, given my reaction with the tattoos and the anxiety over the whole incident. And around, in the haze around who was involved in this becoming public that it was just probably best, from an interaction perspective, that- that apology be issued the way that I did.

Speaker 14: [02:16:16](#) Thank you.

Speaker ONE: [02:16:18](#) Any other questions from the commission? Do you ...

Speaker 15: [02:16:20](#) I have one question, um, Ms. Muhammad, you'd stated in your testimony that um, this was a personal matter, this had nothing to do with the board, are you aware of the letter uh, that the Township of South Orange, uh, the Township of South Orange Village, uh, the Acting in Village Administrator, uh, Adam [Lower 02:16:38] had- had- had sent? And what was the result of that?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:16:45](#) So my understanding is that any things were issued to the board that have not been is- into public record around our attorney client privilege with the- our attorney of the board, that I am not- I am not allowed to share details of what was submitted to the board because I can't ... our attorney ... I- I'm- I'm not sure I can ... I- I don't think that I can answer your question with regard to what we've been told we can and can't say as board issues that aren't public.

Speaker 15: [02:17:34](#) I'm just- I'm just concerned because it says here, into the record, "the Village has great concerns regarding Miss Lawson-Muhammad's response to a routine traffic stop for speeding. A police res- report is available upon request. Thank you for your attention to this." Was there any- was there any- any uh, action taken because of this?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:17:53](#) So, again, the only discussion of this was in private session. This is a public session, this is a public hearing. As a individual board member, I cannot discuss what was discussed around that letter-

Speaker 15: [02:18:11](#) Okay.

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:18:11](#) In private session. Based on guidance from our la- our board lawyer.

Speaker 15: [02:18:19](#) So this wasn't a private matter then, it was actually, it was a board matter? This- this traffic stop resulted in some kind of action that uh, had- had dealings with your board.

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:18:29](#) So if anybody writes a letter to our board that, let's say someone writes a letter and says there's a pothole in the street and it's not in front of a school, is that board a- is that a board action? Is that board business?

Speaker 15: [02:18:49](#) This isn't anybody, this is the acting village administrator who said he has concerns regarding the traffic stop.

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:18:55](#) Right, but what makes that a board issue, I guess, is my question. What makes that a board issue? Does it make it a board issue just because someone says this is a board issue?

Speaker 15: [02:19:09](#) Okay. All right.

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:19:09](#) I-

Speaker 15: [02:19:09](#) Thank you.

Speaker ONE: [02:19:13](#) Do you have your questions and [inaudible 02:19:15]

Speaker 16: [02:19:15](#) Just one point of clarification [crosstalk 02:19:16] just one question. Um, Miss Muhammad d- early on in your testimony you stated, or you said something to the effect, and I don't want to put words in your mouth, so you could stop me, but you were explaining the relationship with that police officer versus you on the board. Meaning such like, um, he was a south um, he was a Maplewood officer, correct? He was a village officer?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:19:43](#) No, it was a South Orange officer [crosstalk 02:19:45]

Speaker 16: [02:19:44](#) Sorry, South Orange officer. Uh, so, what- would- would- if I lived in South Orange, if I lived in the Village, would I be able to vote for you as a- would that be part of your constituency [crosstalk 02:19:52]

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:19:52](#) It does- you can vote for me in South Orange or Maplewood.

Speaker 16: [02:19:54](#) Either one?

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:19:55](#) Yeah. Yeah [crosstalk 02:19:56]

Speaker 16: [02:19:55](#) Thank you.

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:19:55](#) There's no ... it was more, we're two towns that share a school district.

Speaker 16: [02:20:02](#) Right, so when you run for-

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:20:04](#) South Orange and Maplewood [crosstalk 02:20:05] votes for me. Yeah, yeah.

Speaker 16: [02:20:06](#) Okay, that's it. Thank you.

Speaker ONE: [02:20:09](#) Any other questions from the uh, complaint?

Speaker 17: [02:20:17](#) Okay so we- we need to redirect [crosstalk 02:20:20] if you want. To-

Speaker ONE: [02:20:19](#) Oh, that's right.

Speaker 17: [02:20:21](#) You're- you're done?

Speaker ONE: [02:20:21](#) Yeah, you have any ...

Speaker 18: [02:20:23](#) I have nothing further.

Speaker 17: [02:20:25](#) Okay, so, just ... let's just do quick housekeeping again around the exhibits. So you already marked your exhibits in the submission you sent to us. Is that the order you want them submitted?

Speaker 18: [02:20:34](#) Yeah, I think the- the only difference, and uh, you can keep them the same way, it's just I think the ...

Speaker 17: [02:20:42](#) The answers already [crosstalk 02:20:44]

Speaker 18: [02:20:43](#) As a- as a chronological uh, nature [inaudible 02:20:47] but if you have, I think, the- the May 21st statement, [inaudible 02:20:51] one, I believe.

Speaker 17: [02:20:53](#) So exhibit one is, yes, the 5/21/18 statement delivered at the uh, board meeting. That's exhibit one [crosstalk 02:21:07] exhibit two is the- the immediate release for the press. So you want them in that order?

Speaker 18: [02:21:12](#) Uh, I mean, preferably if we- if we would have the May 17th one as exhibit one, following this attempt of uh, chronological order that- that would [inaudible 02:21:19]

Speaker 17: [02:21:20](#) All right, so that we're switching one and two.

Speaker 18: [02:21:22](#) Yes.

Speaker 17: [02:21:24](#) Okay. And do you have any objection to these documents-

Mr. Fields: [02:21:26](#) No-

Speaker 17: [02:21:26](#) Mr. Fields?

Mr. Fields: [02:21:26](#) Not at all.

Speaker 17: [02:21:26](#) Okay.

Speaker 17: [02:21:26](#) So that's one through seven.

Speaker ONE: [02:21:36](#) They've written all their questions ...

Speaker 17: [02:21:36](#) Hm?

Speaker ONE: [02:22:02](#) He's gonna call a witness [crosstalk 02:22:02]

Speaker ONE: [02:22:02](#) No.

Speaker ONE: [02:22:06](#) All right, do you have any other witnesses?

Mr. Fields: [02:22:07](#) [crosstalk 02:22:07] possible, I guess, and for the purposes of housekeeping, one to seven would be now admitted into evidence-

Speaker 17: [02:22:13](#) Yes. And it's- it's, they're gonna be marked as R1, so respondent one through R7. Complainants will be C1 through C4.

Speaker ONE: [02:22:21](#) Okay, we're back. And I believe um, respondent, we have a- uh, a testimonial?

Mr. Fields: [02:22:27](#) Uh, yes, if we could call uh, Anne Marie Maini, please. As uh, respondent's uh, witness.

Speaker ONE: [02:22:35](#) And uh, we swearing in? Yes.

Speaker 17: [02:22:38](#) Do you solemnly swear to- or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

AM Maini: [02:22:46](#) Yes.

Speaker 19: [02:22:46](#) And if it's okay, I'm just going to pull the microphone a little bit closer just so I [crosstalk 02:22:50]

Speaker ONE: [02:22:50](#) Yeah, could you state your name and your position? [crosstalk 02:22:52]

AM Maini: [02:22:53](#) Sure. My name's Anne Marie Maini. I am currently a school board member for the Maplewood South Orange Police. [crosstalk 02:23:01]

Speaker 17: [02:23:01](#) I'll spell your name for the record.

AM Maini: [02:23:02](#) School district, not the police.

AM Maini: [02:23:04](#) A-N-N-E M-A-R-I-E and the last name is Maini, M-A-I-N-I.

Speaker 17: [02:23:11](#) Oh, I'm sorry, what was your position again?

Speaker 19: [02:23:15](#) She's a school board member.

AM Maini: [02:23:16](#) School board member.

Speaker 17: [02:23:17](#) Thank you.

Speaker 19: [02:23:19](#) Miss Maini, if you could uh, tell us uh, what you do for a living, what your occupation is?

AM Maini: [02:23:22](#) Sure. Uh, currently I own a preschool in South Orange and I'm the Owner/Director of the preschool.

Speaker 19: [02:23:32](#) And they said you're a member of the uh, South Orange Maplewood Board of Education?

AM Maini: [02:23:35](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Speaker 19: [02:23:35](#) How- how long have you served as a board member?

AM Maini: [02:23:38](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative), so I am just completing my first term of three years and I have been reelected to serve again starting in January.

Speaker 19: [02:23:49](#) And- and how long have you served uh, Miss Lawson-Muhammad on the board?

AM Maini: [02:23:52](#) Right. So I've served with her for these past three years and uh, I have observed her on the board for the past five years.

Speaker 19: [02:24:01](#) And why did you want to become a member of the uh, South Orange Maplewood Board of Education?

AM Maini: [02:24:08](#) I am acutely aware of the disparity of outcomes in our district. I um, my own children um, uh, have suffered some of uh, the similar inequities that um, have been brought before the board. And I felt that my educational background, I have a Master's in Mathematics Education, a- a Bachelor's in Math. Um, as well as my uh, MBA, uh, could help bridge some of the needs in our- on the school board.

Speaker 19: [02:24:42](#) And as the board member um, serving on the- on the board with uh, Miss Lawson-Muhammad uh, the last three years um,

could you describe your- your personal knowledge of- of her as a board member?

- AM Maini: [02:24:53](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative), mm-hmm (affirmative) so, uh, just so everyone knows uh, I do know Stephanie personally, outside of the board as well. Um, our children, our two oldest uh, boys were in the middle school together and played uh, basketball together.
- AM Maini: [02:25:08](#) Oh.
- AM Maini: [02:25:17](#) And then I have uh, served with Stephanie on the access and equity committee um, for the past two years, where I've been Chair and I also served this past year with her on the policy committee, or maybe that was two years as well um, even though we're looking at disbanding that committee to be more functional. Um, I have served with her on those committees.
- Speaker 19: [02:25:47](#) Could you- could you talk about your experience with Miss Lawson-Muhammad in terms of what type of board member you have uh, had-
- AM Maini: [02:25:54](#) Sure.
- Speaker 19: [02:25:54](#) Upon her to be.
- AM Maini: [02:25:55](#) Sure. So, uh, Stephanie and I don't always agree. Um, we definitely have uh- uh, robust conversation. But she has always uh, been levelheaded and able to move a body of eight additional people through some very difficult conversations around um, our stud- disparity in student outcomes um, supervision of the superintendent, um- uh, issues that have happened in our schools related to race um, and uh, homework assignments, uh, Stephanie has led the conversation, has opened the space for the conversation among board members that may not um, fully understand the impact that some of our uh, institutional practices have had on all our students.
- Mr. Fields: [02:26:53](#) A- and based upon your personal experience and interactions with Ms. Lawson-Muhammad could you talk to us a little bit about her character that you know?
- AM Maini: [02:27:00](#) So um, I know her to be uh, engaged, uh, passionate, uh, willing to state her opinion, willing to challenge and then willing to come back and say, "Okay, yeah, I see that. Let me do this, what about that?" And really uh, really a- a problem solver. Not someone who just um, you know, uh- uh, makes- makes

statements and then- then shuts down. She um, reflects upon her uh, feedback and uh, tries to move, you know, move the conversation toward problem solving.

- Speaker 19: [02:27:47](#) And- and in your opinion is she- is she an asset as a board member to the South Orange Maplewood School District?
- AM Maini: [02:27:51](#) Yes.
- Speaker 19: [02:27:52](#) And what makes her an asset to the school district?
- AM Maini: [02:27:59](#) Well as all- all elected officials, whether we agree on um, the positions in front of us, um, we're all elected officials. So um, and as Stephanie mentioned, she uh, in her second term uh, she did receive a large number of votes um, so she represents a huge constituency um, and um, she's, as I said, she's willing to talk about the difficult conversations. Uh, just this past board meeting uh, the high school was talking about uh, attendance issues and um, the question she asked was what is the ... was there any disparity on um, on our students based on how teachers were administering the attendance. [crosstalk 02:28:55] So she opens up the conversation for people who may not immediately think about the impact for every child [crosstalk 02:29:03] she continues to lead those conversations.
- Speaker 19: [02:29:08](#) Uh, thank you very much.
- Speaker ONE: [02:29:09](#) Okay, any question? Okay, any uh, question from the uh ...
- Speaker 20: [02:29:14](#) Um, have you ever been stopped for a traffic violation?
- AM Maini: [02:29:18](#) I was pulled over when I was in college for speeding. But I [crosstalk 02:29:25] for some reason, I didn't get a ticket. No.
- Speaker 20: [02:29:27](#) Okay, so if you were pulled over today, and I realize theoretical, would it be customary to identify yourself as a school board member?
- AM Maini: [02:29:42](#) As a white woman, that would not be my first instinct. If I was with my children, I might very well say, "I am Anne Marie Maini, I serve this community. I'm on the school board, I'm on the development committee, I'm on the South Orange uh, Library Foundation," yeah, I might rattle off the things that I do because I have personal experience with how children of color are not necessarily treated the same as an old white woman is.
- Speaker ONE: [02:30:14](#) Okay. Any other comments?

Speaker 21: [02:30:18](#) I have a question.

Speaker ONE: [02:30:19](#) Yes.

Speaker 21: [02:30:21](#) Do you um, hold yourself to a higher standard that you're an elected official? In the community itself?

AM Maini: [02:30:31](#) Um, it is a little difficult to answer that given how low our standards have become, of public officials. Um, but I do take full responsibility for any comments or any actions that I take in public. Um, and I also try to um, make myself available for people to conversation with me.

Speaker 21: [02:31:04](#) Okay. Ar- you said this is your second term now? You started [crosstalk 02:31:06]

AM Maini: [02:31:06](#) J- in January I will be in my second term.

Speaker 21: [02:31:08](#) Okay. So you're aware that as uh, as a board member, sometimes your actions outside of quorum could affect the board- the board as well?

AM Maini: [02:31:23](#) I'm aware that when I have to write, when I write a Op-Ed that I identify myself as an individual. During the election campaign when I posted on Facebook, I consistently had to remind people that I am only speaking for myself. Um, I will say that when I'm at my neighborhood association meeting, I may not always say, "This is only my opinion," I sometimes assume that since they've heard it 15 to 20 times from me, that they know that that's um, that's only my opinion.

Speaker 21: [02:32:01](#) Right. But when you're at those neighborhood meetings, association meeting, what you say- you mentioned a few things you were on, if- if someone at that meeting said, "What's going on with that school board? What's going on over there?" And you're- and you're trying to defend some of your actions or whatnot, you would- you would do that, correct?

AM Maini: [02:32:19](#) I- I- yes, I would tend to give some context. I um, as you can even see-

Speaker 21: [02:32:28](#) Right.

AM Maini: [02:32:28](#) Um, I don't um, um, I don't always think we're right. Um, uh, so I don't enter conversations with trying to prove that I'm right. I enter conversations with, "What is your concern? What- what is your point of view?"

Speaker 21: [02:32:46](#) Right.

AM Maini: [02:32:47](#) So, yeah.

Speaker 21: [02:32:49](#) But outside, but when you're in- at those meetings or when you're speaking to someone that's outside of quorum, they know you're a board member, right? So you've identified yourself, because they know you're a board member-

AM Maini: [02:32:59](#) Right.

Speaker 21: [02:33:00](#) So, there's a difference standard, correct? They're speaking to you as a- as a- an elected official?

AM Maini: [02:33:14](#) So it's- in- in our small town, (laughs) South Orange is a pretty small town, um, those- those lines do get blurred. And part of how it has become blurred um, is that our- our village president, as an example, is consistently on Facebook, consistently asking for feedback, consistently reaching out to residents to get information um, and it's not always um ... she does not always say, "I'm doing this on behalf of the town," or "I'm doing this as part of the group."

Speaker 21: [02:33:55](#) Have you ever reached out to Sheena for help?

AM Maini: [02:33:57](#) Oh, sure. Sure.

Speaker 21: [02:33:59](#) Thank you.

Speaker ONE: [02:34:01](#) Any other comments? Okay, just kind of a- kind of a timeline of where we are, we normally have closing arguments and all but because of a couple of issues have been brought up today ah, one is the uh, authenticity of the uh, the tape that we saw here today. Um, both the sides uh, the respondent uh, can give their argument regarding the authenticity uh, by December 7th. Uh, the complainant uh, by the 17th of December and then closing arguments, once they're received, uh, would be on ...

Speaker 17: [02:34:44](#) January [crosstalk 02:34:47]

Speaker ONE: [02:34:48](#) January 11th, yes. And our ... we would get that um, we would have it by both parties by the 11th of January. We will discuss that at our next uh, commission meeting which will be on the January 22nd. And the decision will be made February 26th, which will be that meeting. So there's a process for us to get the information back to review it and so on, make the decision making and then get that back to you.

Speaker ONE: [02:35:19](#) So we will discuss that uh, at our next meeting. Uh, our meeting in January, the 22nd and make the final decision that'll be sent out on the 26th of February.

Speaker 22: [02:35:32](#) Can you tell us [crosstalk 02:35:33]

Speaker 17: [02:35:33](#) Yeah, so ju- ju- just so we- we're clear [crosstalk 02:35:35]

Speaker ONE: [02:35:36](#) Oh, yeah, and share that with each other.

Speaker 17: [02:35:36](#) Re- respondent is gonna be filing paperwork indicating his objections to the authenticity of the videotape that we viewed today. And then complainant's going to have the opportunity to respond to that. So those are the two deadlines.

Speaker 17: [02:35:49](#) You both are going to be required to serve the other side with your paperwork, okay? So respondent's gonna go first, then Mr. Fields, you'll have the opportunity to respond and then your closing briefs will be submitted to our office by the deadline. And again, you're going to serve the other side with your paperwork, but there's not going to be an opportunity for a reply to the other person's closing argument. It's just gonna be one filing and then that will be the end, the record will be closed and then the commission will review the matter at its January meeting.

Speaker 17: [02:36:20](#) Does that make sense?

Speaker ONE: [02:36:21](#) Yeah, it makes- the closing arguments, they're written submissions [crosstalk 02:36:24]

Speaker 17: [02:36:24](#) Correct.

Speaker ONE: [02:36:24](#) Coming back-

Speaker 17: [02:36:25](#) Correct. [crosstalk 02:36:26]

Speaker ONE: [02:36:26](#) Understood.

Speaker 17: [02:36:26](#) I'm sure you'd love to come to Trenton again, but you could do it uh, you can do it in writing.

Speaker ONE: [02:36:32](#) I think uh, you know, I- I do ... appreciate the civility of the- the meeting today. Both sides, remember that the most important thing that we're all about in education, is about the quality of education of our children. And that's uh, foremost of everything that we do and what we should stand for. So, as we all strive to

make a better world, uh, remember, it all starts with our kids. So, again, thank you for your testimony here today. And I will get back to you. [crosstalk 02:37:07]

Speaker 14: [02:37:06](#) Thank you.

Mr. Fields: [02:37:06](#) Thank you.

Lawson-Muhammad: [02:37:08](#) Thank you.

Speaker 17: [02:37:11](#) So we should get a motion going to executive session.

Speaker ONE: [02:37:14](#) Okay. With our housekeeping here and that we've been in public session, we will have a resolution to go back into executive session [crosstalk 02:37:26] well ...

Speaker 17: [02:37:29](#) We're changing.

Speaker ONE: [02:37:29](#) Motion to [crosstalk 02:37:31] go into executive session. [crosstalk 02:37:32]

Speaker 14: [02:37:32](#) Okay.

Speaker 15: [02:37:32](#) Second.

Speaker ONE: [02:37:34](#) Roll call, please.

Speaker 17: [02:37:35](#) Mike Crutches.

Speaker 15: [02:37:36](#) Yes.

Speaker 17: [02:37:36](#) M- Mark Finklestein.

Speaker 23: [02:37:37](#) Yes.

Speaker 17: [02:37:39](#) [inaudible 02:37:39] Kaplan.

Speaker 24: [02:37:39](#) Yes.

Speaker 17: [02:37:40](#) Dennis Roberts [crosstalk 02:37:40]

Speaker 25: [02:37:40](#) Yes.

Speaker 17: [02:37:41](#) Jude [Tennella 02:37:42].

Speaker 26: [02:37:42](#) Yes.

Speaker 17: [02:37:42](#) Richard [Tamko 02:37:43].

Speaker 27: [02:37:43](#) Yes.

PART 5 OF 5 ENDS [02:37:44]