

HALLMAN LAW OFFICE, P.C.

ATTORNEY AT LAW
802 WEST MAIN STREET
POST OFFICE BOX 980
CLAXTON, GEORGIA 30417

Ronald W. Hallman
hallman9@bellsouth.net

TELEPHONE 912-739-4825
TELEFAX 912-739-3082

July 13, 2018

Jennifer Colangelo
Assistant Attorney General
Georgia Department of Law
40 Capitol Square SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-1300

jcolangelo@law.ga.gov

RE: Evans School District – Szilagyi (Open records)

Dear Ms. Colangelo:

Please accept this letter as the response of the Evans County School District to your letter of July 5, 2018, and the complaint of Ms. Szilagyi pertaining to her Open Records Act Request. First, please be assured that the Evans County School District is working diligently in good faith to comply with the request. Unfortunately, the request, as drafted, requires significant retrieval, review and redaction. The request was filed at a time particularly difficult for the Evans County School District since many key employees were on summer break, the remaining employees are gearing up for the start of a new school year and we are in the process moving back into a newly renovated elementary school. The primary purpose of the Evans County School District is to provide quality education for its students and to serve as good stewards for the Evans County taxpayers. Nonetheless, such resources as are required will be, and are being, channeled into this rather massive document request. Please keep in mind that our county is small and the Evans County School District has one of the smallest staffs in the state.

Responding to the individual requests, the items requested in paragraphs number 1, 2 and 3 can be produced as stated in the original response for the cost indicated and within the time lines indicated. You ask for clarification as to why Karen Bland and Alison Boatright were needed for this process. As far as the personnel file, it is the policy of the District that all personnel files be maintained only by Dr. Karen Bland, who is our Executive Director for Human Resources to avoid any issues among co-workers. As far as the requests requiring delving into payroll records, the District had only 3 employees with administrative rights to PC Genesis which is the payroll software used by the District. This is subject to rules of the

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state auditors and is reviewed annually by the state auditors. One of the three persons so authorized to access this information is Sharon Threatte, the subject of this request, who recently resigned. The remaining two are Dr. Bland and Mrs. Boatright who will perform the work. In her position as Executive Director for Human Resources, Dr. Bland is the person responsible for translating the Board approved salary schedules into action forms that are then reviewed, confirmed and entered into the PC Genesis System for the upcoming year. As of the date of the Open Records Act Request, this process had not yet been produced. It is usually completed after the July board meeting so that all personnel are included. The only other person who would have had access to this information is Sharon Threatte, who recently resigned and is the subject of this inquiry.

Regarding the request for e-mail records, further review and research requires us to revise our initial response. At the time that the District made the first estimate regarding the e-mail retrievals, Mr. Ron Myers, who is our Director of Technology was off contract. He returned to work on July 9, 2018, and has done some preliminary research concerning how the retrievals can be done. The District has not received any similar request in the past so we are breaking new ground. Mr. Myers has already spent 2.75 hours in this preliminary research. Deducting out the required quarter hour, this comes to \$90.00 at \$36.00 per hour. Mr. Myers' "preview search" using the key word "Threatte" resulted in the identification of 97,107 e-mails from January 1, 2018 through July 11, 2018. This consisted of 26.21 GB's of data. These e-mails would have to be downloaded. The only way to review for redaction of prohibited personal information is to physically click on each e-mail and attachment (if applicable). Using an estimate of 15 seconds per e-mail that amounts to 404.61 hours, less the deducted quarter hour, which is 404.36 hours at \$18.17 per hour. This is using employee Amy Rogers, an administrative assistant, and comes to a total of \$7,347.22.

The e-mails could be provided electronically. However, if an e-mail or attachment has to be redacted, it would have to be printed and then redacted and deleted from the electronic file. The District has no idea how many e-mails would have to be redacted so they can only come up with an estimate of cost 10 cents per page, for each copy required.

It is apparent and understandable that Ms. Szilagyi does not wish to advance so much expense. However for the District to perform its functions without charging as allowed by the Open Records Act would be a diversion of taxpayer funds which should be spent on children's education and would result it in a windfall for Ms. Szilagyi.

As you suggested in your letter, it might be appropriate for Ms. Szilagyi to provide some limitations on the request or designate exclusionary keywords in order to minimize the time and expense required.

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We had a similar situation last year when Ms. Szilagyi requested bank statements from all accounts maintained for school purposes for a period of 18 months. That would have required review and redaction of every check, endorsement, account number of depositing persons, etc., and would have been an extremely expensive undertaking. Upon being told of the costs involved, Ms. Szilagyi modified her request in a way that allowed her to get the information she was seeking at a fraction of the work and expense that would have been required. She changed her request from bank statements to check registers and the cost went down from \$2,279.37 to \$12.90. We suggest that she do a similar limitation in this situation. Otherwise, we have no choice but to stand by the reasonable charges and deadlines set forth in this response.

The Evans County School District has consistent practices for responses to requests for records. The records are provided as soon as possible at the lowest cost possible. This is sometimes done the same day and at no charge where the records are easily retrievable and easily transmittable. The District has dealt with numerous requests over the years from Ms. Szilagyi and her organization. All have been resolved legally and amicably. This request is being handled the same as all previous requests from her or anyone else.

Our Superintendent Dr. Marty Waters and I stand ready to assist in any way possible to resolve this matter, including further correspondence or personal meetings. We wish to comply fully with the Open Records Act and for Ms. Szilagyi to obtain open access to records she seeks, but cannot do so at the expense of our children and taxpayers.

I look forward to working further with you on this matter. We are sending a copy of this response to Ms. Szilagyi.

Thank you, and with personal regards, I am

Sincerely,



Ronald W. Hallman

RWH/ebh

cc/ Jessica Szilagyi
Dr. Marty Waters