



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF LAW

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July 5, 2018

Via facsimile: 912-739-3082

Mr. Ron Hallman, Esquire
P.O. Box 980
Claxton, Georgia 30417-0980

RE: Open Records Act Complaint from Jessica Szilagyi regarding the Evans County Board of Education

Dear Mr. Hallman:

I am writing to you in your capacity as the attorney for the Evans County Board of Education. Our office received a complaint from Ms. Jessica Szilagyi regarding an Open Records request that she submitted to the school district on June 28, 2018. She requested a personnel file, records of employee salaries, and emails concerning some other topics. A copy of her request is enclosed, along with a copy of the school district's response.

Under Georgia law the Attorney General, as an independent constitutional officer, has the discretionary authority to enforce the Open Records Act and the Open Meetings Act. O.C.G.A. §§ 50-14-5(a), 50-18-73(a). The Attorney General has chosen to exercise that discretion by establishing a mediation program where citizens may raise issues and concerns with us regarding the Acts, and our office then will attempt to resolve disputes between citizens and local government.

I am not aware of all the circumstances surrounding Ms. Szilagyi's request, and I am not assuming the school district violated the law. I would appreciate a response within 10 business days of the date of this letter with some additional information about the district's response to Ms. Szilagyi's request. Specifically, I would like to know if there are employees with lower hourly rates than Dr. Karen Bland and Mrs. Allison Boatwright who have the "necessary skill and training" to locate and redact the requested records.

Also, the estimated cost for items 4 through 6 of Ms. Szilagyi's request was \$6624, due to the amount of time necessary to locate the requested emails. Ms. Szilagyi did not request that any particular keywords be used for the electronic search, and the estimate does not state which

Mr. Ron Hallman, Esq.

July 5, 2018

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search terms the school district plans to use. If you could let Ms. Szilagyi know what keywords the district will be using, she may be able to suggest different or additional keywords that would reduce the number of emails that need to be reviewed (and therefore reduce the cost of responding to her request).

I appreciate your assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Colangelo

JENNIFER COLANGELO
Assistant Attorney General

Enclosures

cc: Ms. Jessica Szilagyi



Evans County Schools

613 West Main Street, Claxton, Georgia 30417
Telephone: (912)739-3544 Fax: (912)739-2492

Dr. Marty Waters, Superintendent
Board Members
David Greene, Chairman
Job Gutierrez
Sharon Haire
Joyce Lockwood
Ed Mosley
Tara Powell
Vernella Welch

Expecting Excellence...No Exceptions, No Excuses!

July 1, 2018

Ms. Jessica Szilagyi
PO Box 717
Jesup, GA 31598

Dear Ms. Szilagyi,

We are in receipt of your records request on June 28, 2018. However, due to employees' contractual days, vacation days, and the July 4th holiday, we will not be able to begin processing your request prior to July 9, 2018. The estimated time and cost of your requests are broken down based upon the items listed in your ORR.

1. Dr. Karen Bland can process this request by July 11, 2018 allowing time for retrieval and redaction. The estimated time is one hour with an estimated cost of \$54.64.
2. Mrs. Alison Boatright can process this request by July 13, 2018 allowing time for compilation of the records. The estimated time is 3 hours with an estimated cost of \$134.34.
3. Dr. Karen Bland can process this request by July 13, 2018 allowing time for compilation of the records. The estimated time is 3 hours with an estimated cost of \$163.92.
- 4-6. These requests will require our Technology Director, Ron Myers, to search through district office personnel emails and BOE member emails for approximately 120 days. With a conservative estimate of 12 emails per employee per day, that would be in excess of 30,000 emails. This process will take approximately 8 hours per employee to retrieve the emails, 184 hours, at a cost of \$6,624.00. Due to the position Mrs. Threatte held, it is probably personal employee information may need to be redacted. We estimate an hour per employee/BOE member (23 hours) at an estimated cost of \$1256.72. Due to the nature of the retrieval process, emails will have to be printed. Therefore, copy costs will apply at \$.10/page.

Mr. Myers is contracted to return to work on July 9, 2018. However, his immediate attention will be required on completing the technological needs for the new renovated CES. He will not be able to begin the process of meeting your request(s) prior to August 20, 2018. We therefore, estimate the completion of this request to be November 2, 2018.

The total estimated cost for your requests is \$8,233.62. If you wish for us to proceed with your request, in part or in full, please remit payment to the Evans County School System on Monday, July 9, 2018.

Sincerely,

Martin G. Waters, Superintendent

Preparing ALL students for success in college and career opportunities of their choice to become citizens who contribute positively to society.



Jessica Szilagyi
P.O. Box 717
Jesup, GA 31598

June 28, 2018

Records Clerk
Evans County Board of Education
613 West Main Street
Claxton, GA 30417

Dear Clerk of Records:

Under the **Georgia Open Records Act § 50.18.70 et seq.**, I am requesting an opportunity to inspect or obtain copies of public records that **pertain to the operations of the Evans County Board of Education**. Specifically, I would like:

1. The personnel file of Sharon Threatte.
2. Documentation that indicates how much each employee in the district office was paid for the 2017-18 school year, less reimbursements.
3. Documentation that indicates how much each employee in the district office will be paid for the 2018-19 school year, less reimbursements, based on the salary scheduled approved by the Board at the June meeting and/or workshop. Please include Sharon Threatte on this list (as it was approved by the Board) even though she is no longer employed by the BOE.
4. Any email correspondence between district office employees that discusses or mentions Sharon Threatte between the time period January 1, 2018 and June 27, 2018. (This should not be construed to include emails sent to or from Sharon Threatte - only those between other employees or Board members)
5. Any documentation, including email correspondence, that indicates an internal decision or a decision by the Board to change the pay and employment classification of Sharon Threatte between March 1, 2018 and June 27, 2018.
6. Any documentation, including email correspondence, that details a discussion or a decision to change the pay or employment classification of any employee in the district office between the time period of March 1, 2018 and June 27, 2018.

If there are any fees for searching for these records, please inform me if the cost will exceed \$ 25.00. I am also requesting that documents be provided electronically to avoid the cost of copies. In the event that documents are not available electronically, my request is to review the documents in person at the Evans County Board of Education district office.

The Georgia Open Records Act requires a response time within three business days. If access to the records I am requesting will take longer than three days, please contact me with information about when I might expect copies or the ability to inspect the requested records.

If you deny any or all of this request, please cite each specific exemption you feel justifies the refusal to release the information and notify me of the appeal procedures available to me under the law.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Jessica Szilagy

770.265.1404