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## **OR School Board to face lawsuit over handling of superintendent dismissal**

DURHAM — An area parent has filed a lawsuit against the Oyster River School Board and its chair after claiming he has not received requested public e-mails and that the board had improperly held meetings to discuss the buyout of the former superintendent and the hiring of his replacement.

Durham resident David Taylor, who has a daughter at the high school, previously sat on the board and said he has issued the paperwork to the Strafford County Superior Court after Board Chair Henry Brackett failed to respond to his request for records about meetings made earlier this year.

The rest of the board has already responded to his request to submit "all records of communication" from Jan. 1 of this year involving the School Board members, other government officials, school officials and anyone else involving requests for non-meetings.

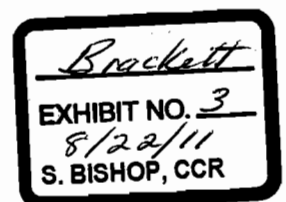
Over the last few months, the district has had turnover of three top positions, including superintendent, director of instruction and high school principal. At meetings, the board has listened to multiple complaints from community members stating they had an agenda and were not providing open discussion with the community.

Taylor claims the board has failed to inform the public of alleged meetings held just before the buyout of the superintendent's contract. The reason for the buyout has still not been unveiled to the public, and Taylor has said people have wanted answers.

"In recent months, the Board has repeatedly violated the tenets of RSA 91-A, has actively avoided compliance with RSA 91-A: 2 and RSA 91-A: 3, and has pursued a hidden agenda that is destructive to the high quality of education expected by the citizens of Durham, Madbury, Lee," Taylor wrote.

He alleges in his filing that the decision to end former superintendent Howard Colter's contract and then the subsequent hiring of his replacement was done in numerous non-meetings.

He said he is requesting the information because the district has the right to know what the school board has been doing.



Brackett said on Friday he admits he has not yet responded to Taylor's request and said he is still sifting through more than 3,500 e-mails.

"If I knew a request like this would be coming, I would have put them in files," he said.

Brackett said he had been using a personal e-mail account and spent more than three hours Thursday night trying to organize his e-mails. He is currently in the process of switching to his Oyster River Cooperative School District e-mail address that was provided by the district for board members.

Brackett said he is "close to finishing" putting the request together and will then send it to the board's attorney for review.

"I realize it's my responsibility," he said. "I will admit it."

Current Superintendent Leon Levesque said to abide by Right To Know regulations, the board may go into nonmeetings only if meeting with legal counsel or training.

"If you are to meet in consultation with legal counsel, that is not a meeting," he said.

If the board has violated the Right To Know law, the board could face paying attorney fees, court fees and would have to abide by any court rulings.

If a board member has shared information that was not public, they would have to be removed from the board, he said.

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