

New details emerge in dispute with ex-school chief

down. Santomero's request that the district pay his legal fees associated with the litigation. The school district halted the ruling in a pair of news releases last week.



Debra Jackson

"The newly unredacted pages say nothing new, are similar to what has already been released, and simply echo what the (school) board

has stated from the outset: its dispute with the previous superintendent was performance-based and did not arise from any single incident or event," the district said in a Friday news release. "With limited management options under New York State Education Law, the board chose to act decisively and settle the dispute rather than be drawn into a prolonged, costly and disruptive disciplinary hearing with its former superintendent."

Jackson could not immediately be reached for comment Friday. It wasn't clear on Friday how much Santomero — a school board member from 1996 to 1999 — has spent on the litigation. Robert Sternbach, Santomero's attorney, said his client wanted to review the less-redacted documents before deciding his next step in the case.

"Mr. Santomero is pleased that we did get a lot of information that would not have otherwise been made publicly available," Sternbach said. Santomero has been posting updates on the litigation on his Web site — www.bedfordtownmeeting.com — including links to the redacted documents that have been released as a result of the lawsuit.

The documents cover a variety of topics, including teacher certification issues and a child-abuse reporting policy for educators. The 2007 separation agreement — which ended Jackson's contract three years early — said the former superintendent and the district had a dispute over her job performance and wanted to fire her, but Jackson countered there wasn't any reason to do that and she would have sued if that happened.

Local residents were angered by the specifics of the dispute have been kept under wraps, particularly given the compensation deal provided Jackson.

Bedford district ordered to provide updated documents

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BEDFORD — The Bedford Central School District last week released updated documents that provide some additional insight into the strained relations between former Superintendent Debra Jackson and the school board before they agreed to a controversial 2007 separation agreement providing her \$650,000 and free lifetime family health care coverage.

Some previous redactions to the documents were lifted as part of a Dec. 24 order from State Supreme Court Justice Barbara Zambelli, who is overseeing a lawsuit brought by former School Board member Camillo Santomero, who has been trying to unearth details of the job dispute that led to the agreement.

Among the documents is a March 2, 2007, e-mail from School Board member Susan Wollin that criticized Jackson's performance at a Bedford Hills elementary school parents meeting and said the former superintendent had a "deteriorating" relationship with the district's teachers union.

Although Zambelli's 17-page ruling ordered the district to remove some redactions made to materials released in the lawsuit, the judge ruled after reviewing some 520 pages of documents behind closed doors that the district was indeed entitled to most of the redactions they made.

In particular, Zambelli found the district properly withheld draft disciplinary charges that were never formally filed or proven, saying their release would constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

The judge also turned