



SPRINGFIELD

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Every Student, Every Day

TO: Ken Kohl, Vice Chair, Springfield Public Schools Board of Directors
FROM: Todd Hamilton, Superintendent
David Collins, Assistant Superintendent
DATE: August 6, 2025
RE: Public Complaint Regarding Director Jonathan Light's Conduct

NATURE OF COMPLAINT

We are submitting this formal complaint regarding the conduct of Director Jonathan Light. After reviewing internal and external communications and supporting documentation, we believe Director Light has engaged in conduct that appears to violate the Board-Superintendent Operating Agreement, Board policies, and potentially Oregon law.

This complaint addresses five interrelated concerns:

1. Interference in an Ongoing Complaint Process
2. Unauthorized Communication with the Oregon Department of Education (ODE)
3. Failure to Disclose Relevant Information
4. Improper Use of Board Title and District Resources
5. Potential Violation of Oregon Public Meetings Law

Issue #1: Interference in an Ongoing Complaint Process

Director Light may have collaborated with a current district employee who is the complainant in an active ODE complaint. Available records show that he may have received input from the complainant on messaging and coordinated talking points that were ultimately shared with district leadership and the Board on issues tied to the complaint. In communications with ODE staff, the content and tone of Director Light's messages closely reflected the complainant's concerns and reflected a degree of advocacy that could be interpreted as an attempt to influence ODE's response to the complaint. This conduct, taking place during an open investigation, raises substantial concerns about Board member neutrality and creates the appearance of interference with an external oversight process.

Issue #2 Unauthorized Communication with ODE

Director Light independently and repeatedly contacted ODE staff, including Dr. Charlene Williams and Mark Mayer, without Board authorization or coordination with the Superintendent. These communications included requests for updates, references to a pending ODE complaint, and commentary on district compliance issues.

He used his official Board email and title to engage in these discussions, which created the appearance of Board involvement despite the lack of delegation. The Superintendent was not informed, included, or consulted, as would be expected for matters involving district operations or topics that could reasonably come before the Board for discussion or oversight.

Issue #3 Failure to Disclose Relevant Information

Director Light received direct updates from ODE staff regarding the pending ODE complaint, including communications from Mark Mayer and other ODE officials. These updates were pertinent to district operations and Board oversight. Despite their significance, Director Light neither shared the information with the Superintendent nor acknowledged it during his own request for an update from the Superintendent on April 13, 2025.

This lack of disclosure fell short of the expectation that Board members share relevant information with the Superintendent in a timely and transparent manner.

Issue #4 Improper Use of Board Title and District Resources

Director Light used his official district email account and Board title in communications with ODE that were not authorized by the Board or coordinated with the Superintendent. These communications addressed a pending complaint and district-level matters and were presented in a manner that may have conveyed official Board endorsement.

In at least one instance, Director Light blind-copied the complainant, who is an active party in the ODE investigation, on a message sent to ODE staff. This action blurred the line between personal advocacy and official capacity and gave the appearance of formal Board endorsement where none existed.

Issue #5 Potential Violation of Oregon Public Meetings Law

Prior to distributing a message to the full Board and district staff on July 30, 2025, Director Light solicited input on the draft from Director Langworthy, the complainant, and several non-Board individuals. These communications occurred outside of a public meeting and addressed matters directly related to a pending ODE complaint and topics that Director Light has raised with the Board.

While the total number of Board members involved did not constitute a quorum, this pattern of serial communication and coordination with an advisory group on official Board business may constitute a violation of Oregon's Public Meetings Law or, at minimum, create the appearance of circumventing public transparency.

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

Director Light is a long-serving Board member with extensive governance experience and training. He played an active role in drafting the Board's Operating Agreements and received both verbal and written clarification of expectations, including guidance from the Superintendent, prior Board Chairs, and the full Board in December 2023.

Given this history, it is reasonable to expect that Director Light understands his responsibilities and limitations as a public official. His repeated actions represent a misuse of authority, disregard for Board policy, and a breach of the Board Member Oath of Office. These actions have created a climate of fear and intimidation for staff who are fulfilling responsibilities authorized by Board policy.

The Board must act to protect its processes, uphold its integrity, and ensure staff are not subject to retaliation or undue influence from individual Board members.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

We respectfully request that the Board:

- Schedule this matter for executive session with legal counsel at the next opportunity.
- Initiate a formal review under the Board's complaint procedures.
- Reaffirm expectations for all Board members regarding authority, communication, and conduct during investigations.

SUGGESTED RESOLUTIONS

We respectfully request that the Board take the following actions:

1. Formally censure Director Light.
2. Remove him from his position as Board Chair.
3. Reaffirm his obligation to comply with the Board Member Oath of Office, Board policy, and applicable state and federal law.
4. Require Director Light to complete comprehensive school board governance training.
5. Provide a written reminder of his obligations under Board Policy GBMA (Whistleblower) and all related legal protections for district staff.