Gmail

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>

Ms. Sykes

11 messages

Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 4:32 PM
To: "mtotman@bbrsd.org" <mtotman@bbrsd.org>, "mgrill@bbrsd.org" <mgrill@bbrsd.org>, "aganem@bbrsd.org" <aganem@bbrsd.org>

Good afternoon,

I'm writing to express my family's very deep disappointment in Ms. Sykes' departure from BES. Ms. Sykes is an exceptional principal and has brought much-needed energy and structure to BES. I have appreciated her emphasis on academics (which I felt was lacking from prior principals), while she has made learning fun and engaging for the students. She is selfless with her time and incredibly dedicated to the students. As a parent, I am comfortable approaching her with any issue and having an open and honest dialogue, and I also trust that she greatly cares for and considers the children's social/emotional needs and safety. It is also obvious that she has a wonderful relationship with her staff, which is crucial to the effective running of a school.

The departure of Ms. Sykes would be a significant and terrible loss for our community. I implore you to do everything in your power to retain Ms. Sykes.

Thank you,

Amanda Baer

MIRICK

Amanda Marie Baer | Partner
508.860.1472 | Direct
abaer@miricklaw.com
Westborough Office | miricklaw.com

Stay Connected:

The information contained in this electronic message is legally privileged and confidential under applicable law, and is intended only for the use of the individual or entity named above. This electronic message and any attachments may also contain information that is protected by federal and state law, including the HIPAA Privacy Rule. If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, copying or disclosure of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify Mirick O'Connell at (508)791-8500 and delete this communication immediately without copying or distributing it.

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 4:32 PM
To: abaer@miricklaw.com

Thank you for your email. I'm currently away from the office and focusing on various projects but will be sure to respond when I return. thank you.

--
Michael Totman, Chair
Berlin Boylston Regional School Committee
508.386.5000

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 4:36 PM
To: "Baer, Amanda Marie" <abaer@miricklaw.com>
Cc: "mgrill@bbrsd.org" <mgrill@bbrsd.org>, "aganem@bbrsd.org" <aganem@bbrsd.org>

Thank you for your concern. I believe I can speak for the committee that we are also emotional how Mrs. Sykes is leaving, but respect her decision as it seems to be based on personal reasons for her. This is a personnel matter so we won't be able to comment much more on that.
[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]

Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 5:50 PM
To: "nbilotta@bbrsd.org" <nbilotta@bbrsd.org>
Cc: "mgrill@bbrsd.org" <mgrill@bbrsd.org>, "aganem@bbrsd.org" <aganem@bbrsd.org>, Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>

Hello,

I did not know I was supposed to include you on my email to ensure it is part of the public record. Please see below, thank you!

MIRICK

Amanda Marie Baer | Partner
508.860.1472 | Direct
abaer@miricklaw.com
Westborough Office | miricklaw.com

Stay Connected:

From: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 3, 2025 4:36 PM
To: Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com>
Cc: mgrill@bbrsd.org; aganem@bbrsd.org
Subject: Re: Ms. Sykes

CAUTION: This is an external email. Please be careful when clicking links or opening attachments.

Thank you for your concern. I believe I can speak for the committee that we are also emotional how Mrs. Sykes is leaving, but respect her decision as it seems to be based on personal reasons for her. This is a personnel matter so we won't be able to comment much more on that.

On Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 4:32 PM Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com> wrote:

> Good afternoon,
>
> I'm writing to express my family's very deep disappointment in Ms. Sykes' departure from BES. Ms. Sykes is an exceptional principal and has brought much-needed energy and structure to BES. I have appreciated her emphasis on academics (which I felt was lacking from prior principals), while she has made learning fun and engaging for the students. She is selfless with her time and incredibly dedicated to the students. As a parent, I am comfortable approaching her with any issue and having an open and honest dialogue, and I also trust that she greatly cares for and considers the children's social/emotional needs and safety. It is also obvious that she has a wonderful relationship with her staff, which is crucial to the effective running of a school.
>
> The departure of Ms. Sykes would be a significant and terrible loss for our community. I implore you to do everything in your power to retain Ms. Sykes.
>
> Thank you,
>
> Amanda Baer
>
> **Amanda Marie Baer** | Partner
> 508.860.1472 | Direct
> abaer@miricklaw.com
> Westborough Office | miricklaw.com
>
> **Stay Connected:**
>
> The information contained in this electronic message is legally privileged and confidential under applicable law, and is intended only for the use of the individual or entity named above. This electronic message and any attachments may also contain information that is protected by federal and state law, including the HIPAA Privacy Rule. If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, copying or disclosure of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify Mirick O'Connell at (508)791-8500 and delete this communication immediately without copying or distributing it.

--

Michael Totman, Chair

Berlin Boylston Regional School Committee

508.386.5000
[Quoted text hidden]

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 8:43 PM
To: "Baer, Amanda Marie" <abaer@miricklaw.com>
Cc: "nbilotta@bbrsd.org" <nbilotta@bbrsd.org>, "mgrill@bbrsd.org" <mgrill@bbrsd.org>, "aganem@bbrsd.org" <aganem@bbrsd.org>

Hi Amanda, I couldn't help but notice your comments on social media that a school committee member responded to you with something not truthful to your email.

I'd like to get to the bottom of that with the committee, would you mind sharing what it was that was not truthful?

Our current situation is difficult enough, I would not want lies or untruths to complicate matters.

I can assure you that no committee member should be responding with anything other than truth in any situation. Thank you.



Michael Totman, Chair
Berlin Boylston Regional School Committee
508.386.5000
[Quoted text hidden]

Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com>
To: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Cc: "nbilotta@bbrsd.org" <nbilotta@bbrsd.org>, "mgrill@bbrsd.org" <mgrill@bbrsd.org>, "aganem@bbrsd.org" <aganem@bbrsd.org>

Hi Mike,

I was told by several individuals with knowledge that the decision was not a personal decision made by her; instead, she was told she had to leave/forced out. I am not g
want to be clear that I have the utmost respect for Mr. Ganem – I think he has a done a wonderful and remarkable job for the school system, especially with the budget (a
has brought some much-needed changes. I also think that you all made the right decision with Ms. Ayles and the previous superintendent(s), so I am not outraged at the
others are within Boylston.

However, I am just so incredibly disappointed if a decision was made to remove Ms. Sykes or if she was made to feel that she had no choice but to resign. I am also disa
being transparent about what happened. I certainly understand the need to maintain privacy, but I think it would go a long way in the community to be more forthright, ev
was a “mutual decision” or some other PR-approved term.

I’m happy to discuss.

Thank you,

Amanda

MIRICK

Amanda Marie Baer | Partner
508.860.1472 | Direct
abaer@miricklaw.com
Westborough Office | miricklaw.com

Stay Connected:

From: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 3, 2025 8:44 PM
To: Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com>
Cc: nbilotta@bbrsd.org; mgrill@bbrsd.org; aganem@bbrsd.org
Subject: Re: Ms. Sykes

CAUTION: This is an external email. Please be careful when clicking links or opening attachments.

Hi Amanda, I couldn't help but notice your comments on social media that a school committee member responded to you with something not truthful to your email.

I'd like to get to the bottom of that with the committee, would you mind sharing what it was that was not truthful?

Our current situation is difficult enough, I would not want lies or untruths to complicate matters.

I can assure you that no committee member should be responding with anything other than truth in any situation. Thank you.



Michael Totman, Chair

Berlin Boylston Regional School Committee

508.386.5000

On Thu, Apr 3, 2025 at 5:50 PM Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com> wrote:

> Hello,

I did not know I was supposed to include you on my email to ensure it is part of the public record. Please see below, thank you!

Amanda Marie Baer | Partner
508.860.1472 | Direct
abaer@miricklaw.com
Westborough Office | miricklaw.com

Stay Connected:

[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Fri, Apr 4, 2025 at 3:47 PM
To: "Baer, Amanda Marie" <abaer@miricklaw.com>
Cc: "nbilotta@bbrsd.org" <nbilotta@bbrsd.org>, "mgrill@bbrsd.org" <mgrill@bbrsd.org>, "aganem@bbrsd.org" <aganem@bbrsd.org>

Thank you. Professionally speaking, there are only two people on this Earth related to this district who SHOULD have any knowledge of her specific reasons for leaving, and those are Principal Sykes herself and her manager, Interim Superintendent Ganem. If either of them have spoken to you about this personal situation, which led you to make your post on social media, then I apologize that they have put you in that situation. That would be incredibly unprofessional of either of them.

As I believe they have more integrity than that, and both have told me directly that the reasons for her departure have not been discussed with any parents in the district beyond her statement, I am confused about your comments and about the entire conversation taking place on social media right now.

This is an employment/personnel situation and out of respect for Principal Sykes request, no further details of her personal situation are being shared or should be shared. If what you have told me is true, however, I am very disappointed that the situation didn't work its way through appropriate channels, and it seems like that there is a lost opportunity here.

Your post specifically mentioned you were told something untrue by a certain school committee member, and that's what I'm interested in. I did not tell you anything untrue, and if anyone else provided personal employee related information, that is highly inappropriate and I'm sorry they put you in that position. I'll remind the committee of our role in employment related situations.

What I can tell you is that the idea she was removed or forced to resign in ANY way by ANY person is completely false. In fact the exact opposite is true. I gave explicit, specific, crystal clear recommendations that she should be encouraged to stay, as she is a source of stability in this district, from day 1. She was an important part of our negotiations earlier this year and I had every hope for her to be an important part in our upcoming superintendent search.

Unfortunately it does appear that somebody is spreading some type of rumor and stoking theories online. I'm afraid of the detrimental effect this might have on our upcoming leadership searches; I would hate an applicant to come across these posts on FB and form an unwarranted impression of the people in our district, before they even decide to apply for our open positions.

Thank you for reaching out and providing the information that you have.

[Quoted text hidden]

Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com> Fri, Apr 4, 2025 at 4:14 PM
To: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Cc: "nbilotta@bbrsd.org" <nbilotta@bbrsd.org>, "mgrill@bbrsd.org" <mgrill@bbrsd.org>, "aganem@bbrsd.org" <aganem@bbrsd.org>

Hi Mike,

It was not Ms Sikes, Mr Ganem, or anyone on SC. I'm at the doctors with my son, but wanted to respond quickly to those points. I'll review and respond (if there are other points you'd like me to respond to, I just quickly glanced) to the rest of the email later.

Thanks,
Amanda

MIRICK

Amanda Marie Baer | Partner
508.860.1472 | Direct
abaer@miricklaw.com
Westborough Office | miricklaw.com

Stay Connected:

From: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Sent: Friday, April 4, 2025 3:47:22 PM
To: Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com>
Cc: nbilotta@bbrsd.org <nbilotta@bbrsd.org>; mgrill@bbrsd.org <mgrill@bbrsd.org>; aganem@bbrsd.org <aganem@bbrsd.org>
Subject: Re: Ms. Sykes

[Quoted text hidden]

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Sat, Apr 5, 2025 at 11:29 AM
To: "Baer, Amanda Marie" <abaer@miricklaw.com>
Cc: "nbilotta@bbrsd.org" <nbilotta@bbrsd.org>, "mgrill@bbrsd.org" <mgrill@bbrsd.org>, "aganem@bbrsd.org" <aganem@bbrsd.org>

Thank you for clearing that up and responding so quickly. I'm afraid I'm even more confused now. Was that not you, who posted on FB that a certain member of the school committee gave you a response that does not appear to be truthful?

I need to make sure I have my facts correct.

1. Only Principal Sykes knows the full reason why she has decided to make a career choice and take a job in a new district, a process that started months ago and was published online several weeks ago, about which we were officially informed only this week, and she has made a statement to the district that it is due to personal reasons. We respect this and want to leave it at that.
2. We know that Principal Sykes informed her manager of her resignation, and a reasonable person would presume that Principal Sykes discussed this with her manager, Superintendent Ganem.
3. She has released an official statement that this is for personal reasons and does not wish to entertain any requests to stay.
4. You posted on Facebook in the comment section of a post on the BBRSD Community page that "a certain member of the school committee does not appear to be truthful" within a comment thread, the context of which is that this sc member told you something untrue in regard to Principal Sykes' departure.
5. You now say it was neither Principal Sykes, Interim Superintendent Ganem, or any member of the school committee who told you this, but that it is an individual with knowledge of the situation who told you something that contradicts Principal Sykes public statement.

Since you have not spoken with Principal Sykes, and she has not told you any other reason for her departure, I would presume that any comments from you, regardless of who else told you, on social media or publicly in regard to the principal's departure that appear as if you have some other knowledge of the situation, must be based on rumor, speculation, conjecture, or hearsay.

When you hold yourself out as someone who has specific knowledge of a situation that is contrary to the statement released publicly by Principal Sykes, and make comments that suggest there is some conspiracy behind the true reason for her departure being hidden, you do our district and the town a great disservice. I believe this entire social media conversation could do a HUGE disservice to our district, our teachers, our students, and our taxpayers, if a qualified potential applicant were to come across this mess and decide it wasn't worth applying for our open position because our district seems to be in disarray, which it is not, based on these wild accusations.

The fact that you are a partner for a major law firm, which also happens to represent the Town of Boylston, and which also used to represent the school district, makes this situation all the more complicated and may lend credence to the online speculation, when it deserves none.

I'm of the impression that the attorney/client relationship between Mirick and The BBRSD ended on a positive, mutually respectful note. The fact that you've made these comments and sent these emails using your Mirickclaw.com email address makes me wonder if there is something here that I'm not aware of in regard to our standing with Mirick? Regardless, it's an unfortunate situation we find ourselves in as you know well that personnel matters should not be discussed publicly.

Would you consider making another comment in response to your post online clarifying that in fact it was not a school committee member who told you something that "does not appear truthful"? That could go a long way to helping the district attract our next leaders and turn the conversation from misplaced outrage to focused support in attracting our next great principal. We have enough issues with the member towns not supporting the schools that administrators might not want to walk into, we don't need rumor to run rampant and scare them off completely.

Thank you for being so open to this conversation.
[Quoted text hidden]

Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com> Sat, Apr 5, 2025 at 4:30 PM
To: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Cc: "nbilotta@bbrsd.org" <nbilotta@bbrsd.org>, "mgrill@bbrsd.org" <mgrill@bbrsd.org>, "aganem@bbrsd.org" <aganem@bbrsd.org>

Hi Mike,

Even though I am a partner at Mirick, I have purposefully never been involved in the representation of the Town or the School Committee. Since I am still a taxpayer and have students in the school, I am allowed to have an opinion and state such opinion about Town/school matter. Anyway, with all that said, I deleted the comment. I really hope the SC can refocus on the issues at hand and the deeply upset community.

Thank you for the time and effort you put into the SC. I'm certain it is a difficult job and I did not intend to add additional stress. I am just heartbroken by the loss of Ms. Sykes.

Thanks,

Amanda

MIRICK

Amanda Marie Baer | Partner
508.860.1472 | Direct
abaer@miricklaw.com
Westborough Office | miricklaw.com

Stay Connected:

From: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Sent: Saturday, April 5, 2025 11:29 AM
To: Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com>
Cc: nbilotta@bbrsd.org; mgrill@bbrsd.org; aganem@bbrsd.org
Subject: Re: Ms. Sykes

CAUTION: This is an external email. Please be careful when clicking links or opening attachments.

Thank you for clearing that up and responding so quickly. I'm afraid I'm even more confused now. Was that not you, who posted on FB that a certain member of the school committee gave you a response that does not appear to be truthful?

I need to make sure I have my facts correct.

1. Only Principal Sykes knows the full reason why she has decided to make a career choice and take a job in a new district, a process that started months ago and was published online several weeks ago, about which we were officially informed only this week, and she has made a statement to the district that it is due to personal reasons. We respect this and want to leave it at that.
2. We know that Principal Sykes informed her manager of her resignation, and a reasonable person would presume that Principal Sykes discussed this with her manager, Superintendent Ganem.
3. She has released an official statement that this is for personal reasons and does not wish to entertain any requests to stay.
4. You posted on Facebook in the comment section of a post on the BBRSD Community page that "a certain member of the school committee does not appear to be truthful" within a comment thread, the context of which is that this sc member told you something untrue in regard to Principal Sykes' departure.
5. You now say it was neither Principal Sykes, Interim Superintendent Ganem, or any member of the school committee who told you this, but that it is an individual with knowledge of the situation who told you something that contradicts Principal Sykes public statement.

Since you have not spoken with Principal Sykes, and she has not told you any other reason for her departure, I would presume that any comments from you, regardless of who else told you, on social media or publicly in regard to the principal's departure that appear as if you have some other knowledge of the situation, must be based on rumor, speculation, conjecture, or hearsay.

When you hold yourself out as someone who has specific knowledge of a situation that is contrary to the statement released publicly by Principal Sykes, and make comments that suggest there is some conspiracy behind the true reason for her departure being hidden, you do our district and the town a great disservice. I believe this entire social media conversation could do a HUGE disservice to our district, our teachers, our students, and our taxpayers, if a qualified potential applicant were to come across this mess and decide it wasn't worth applying for our open position because our district seems to be in disarray, which it is not, based on these wild accusations.

The fact that you are a partner for a major law firm, which also happens to represent the Town of Boylston, and which also used to represent the school district, makes this situation all the more complicated and may lend credence to the online speculation, when it deserves none.

I'm of the impression that the attorney/client relationship between Mirick and The BBRSD ended on a positive, mutually respectful note. The fact that you've made these comments and sent these emails using your Miricklaw.com email address makes me wonder if there is something here that I'm not aware of in regard to our standing with Mirick? Regardless, it's an unfortunate situation we find ourselves in as you know well that personnel matters should not be discussed publicly.

Would you consider making another comment in response to your post online clarifying that in fact it was not a school committee member who told you something that "does not appear truthful"? That could go a long way to helping the district attract our next leaders and turn the conversation from misplaced outrage to focused support in attracting our next great principal. We have enough issues with the member towns not supporting the schools that administrators might not want to walk into, we don't need rumor to run rampant and scare them off completely.

Thank you for being so open to this conversation.

On Fri, Apr 4, 2025 at 4:14 PM Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com> wrote:

> Hi Mike,
>
> It was not Ms Sikes, Mr Ganem, or anyone on SC. I'm at the doctors with my son, but wanted to respond quickly to those points. I'll review and respond (if there are other points you'd like me to respond to, I just quickly glanced) to the rest of the email later.
>
> Thanks,
>
> Amanda

Amanda Marie Baer | Partner
508.860.1472 | Direct
abaer@miricklaw.com
Westborough Office | miricklaw.com

Stay Connected:

From: Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org>
Sent: Friday, April 4, 2025 3:47:22 PM
To: Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com>
Cc: nbilotta@bbrsd.org <nbilotta@bbrsd.org>; mgrill@bbrsd.org <mgrill@bbrsd.org>; aganem@bbrsd.org <aganem@bbrsd.org>
Subject: Re: Ms. Sykes

CAUTION: This is an external email. Please be careful when clicking links or opening attachments.

Thank you. Professionally speaking, there are only two people on this Earth related to this district who SHOULD have any knowledge of her specific reasons for leaving, and those are Principal Sykes herself and her manager, Interim Superintendent Ganem. If either of them have spoken to you about this personal situation, which led you to make your post on social media, then I apologize that they have put you in that situation. That would be incredibly unprofessional of either of them.

As I believe they have more integrity than that, and both have told me directly that the reasons for her departure have not been discussed with any parents in the district beyond her statement, I am confused about your comments and about the entire conversation taking place on social media right now.

This is an employment/personnel situation and out of respect for Principal Sykes request, no further details of her personal situation are being shared or should be shared. If what you have told me is true, however, I am very disappointed that the situation didn't work its way through appropriate channels, and it seems like that there is a lost opportunity here.

Your post specifically mentioned you were told something untrue by a certain school committee member, and that's what I'm interested in. I did not tell you anything untrue, and if anyone else provided personal employee related information, that is highly inappropriate and I'm sorry they put you in that position. I'll remind the committee of our role in employment related situations.

What I can tell you is that the idea she was removed or forced to resign in ANY way by ANY person is completely false. In fact the exact opposite is true. I gave explicit, specific, crystal clear recommendations that she should be encouraged to stay, as she is a source of stability in this district, from day 1. She was an important part of our negotiations earlier this year and I had every hope for her to be an important part in our upcoming superintendent search.

Unfortunately it does appear that somebody is spreading some type of rumor and stoking theories online. I'm afraid of the detrimental effect this might have on our upcoming leadership searches; I would hate an applicant to come across these posts on FB and form an unwarranted impression of the people in our district, before they even decide to apply for our open positions.

Thank you for reaching out and providing the information that you have.

On Fri, Apr 4, 2025 at 3:12 PM Baer, Amanda Marie <abaer@miricklaw.com> wrote:

> Hi Mike,
>
> I was told by several individuals with knowledge that the decision was not a personal decision made by her; instead, she was told she had to leave/forced out. I am not going to identify any of them. I want to be clear that I have the utmost respect for Mr. Ganem – I think he has a done a wonderful and remarkable job for the school system, especially with the budget (as you all have this year), and has brought some much-needed changes. I also think that you all made the right decision with Ms. Ayles and the previous superintendent(s), so I am not outraged at the number of turnovers as others are within Boylston.
>
> However, I am just so incredibly disappointed if a decision was made to remove Ms. Sykes or if she was made to feel that she had no choice but to resign. I am also disappointed if the SC is not being transparent about what happened. I certainly understand the need to maintain privacy, but I think it would go a long way in the community to be more forthright, even if that is just saying that it was a “mutual decision” or some other PR-approved term.
>
> I’m happy to discuss.

Thank you,

Amanda

Amanda Marie Baer | Partner
508.860.1472 | Direct
abaer@miricklaw.com
Westborough Office | miricklaw.com

Stay Connected:

[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]
[Quoted text hidden]

Michael Totman <mtotman@bbrsd.org> Sun, Apr 6, 2025 at 7:13 PM
To: "Baer, Amanda Marie" <abaer@miricklaw.com>
Cc: "nbilotta@bbrsd.org" <nbilotta@bbrsd.org>, "mgrill@bbrsd.org" <mgrill@bbrsd.org>, "aganem@bbrsd.org" <aganem@bbrsd.org>

Deleting the comment doesn't really fix the damage done, at least not as much as publicly correcting it like an elected official would. I would hope you are more careful when you are suggesting that school committee members, or anyone, aren't being truthful in the future.

Everyone, including committee members, were just as surprised and upset when this news came seemingly out of nowhere. She has made her decision and specifically requested we do not try to change her mind. Our responsibility now is to support the superintendent in finding the best replacement for her that he can to continue to move BES forward.

Michael Totman, Chair
Berlin Boylston Regional School Committee
508.386.5000

[Quoted text hidden]