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DOCTOR BRADLEY LAYFIELD DEFENDS HIS GOOD NAME

Indian River: After three months of silence, Dr. Bradley Layfield, the principal of Sussex Central High School, has authorized his attorneys to defend his good name from the rumors surrounding the way the school year ended in May. For example, just this week the media reported that he still "has not returned [its] phone calls." And School Board member Don Hatier also stated that: "this was caused by breaking up the fight," Dr. Layfield "will need to talk with an attorney," and the school now is "safe," adding to the mystery of what happened that day.

"The Book of Proverbs 22:1 teaches that 'A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold,' and so, to clear his good name, I am releasing the results of my investigation into the wrongful suspension of principal Bradley Layfield," said civil rights attorney Thomas Neuberger today.

"This suspension is now 12 weeks old and the next school year is upon us. I have completed my investigation and I have concluded that there is no factual basis for this suspension. It appears that the suspension mistakenly occurred because my client exercised his discretion on May 17th in sharing a surveillance video with professional staff with a need to know of a dangerous school fight, with racial overtones, that erupted that day," said Neuberger.

Factually, two black female seniors ("Y" and "Z") started a fight with an unnamed white female junior ("X") in the crowded main school hallway just before the opening bell on May 17, 2023. X was yelling at a white male she was following who had deflated the tires of another student's auto in the parking lot, which she had videotaped. Y and Z engaged her, told her to shut up, cursed her and started to attack her before Y and Z were separated by a school Constable and then restrained by two school staff, a Custodian who held Z and assistant principal Donovan, a female, who held Y. Y then broke free of Donovan to jump back aggressively and dangerously into the fight, Donovan grabbed her shirt trying to hold on to her and it pulled down revealing one breast, for 1-2 seconds, for 2-3 steps, before Y covered it up, running to again attack X to injure her, in the crowded school hallway. At least one female onlooker student had a shocked facial expression over A's brief exposure. Y and Z got away from the potentially explosive racial incident, the white female junior was taken to DSP Det. Cannon's office, who was the SRO.

School staff had issued **two radio calls** for help during the altercation. So this was thought to be a serious fight, possibly with racial overtones, and school fights are a major unpublicized problem in this and other public school districts throughout the State of Delaware and they need to be controlled and prevented from escalating into serious injuries for any students.

"There is a legal duty on all school personnel to keep their students safe from physical injury when they are away from their parents and in our public schools," added Neuberger.

Dr. Layfield ran to the fight in the main hallway before the day began but it had resolved when he arrived. On returning to the office, and after reciting the pledge of allegiance to start the school day, he began to investigate what had happened. He first found X in Det. Cannon's office, with two other state troopers on the scene for unrelated criminal matters, reviewing surveillance camera footage and cell phone video.

Next he located Z and Y who were in assistant principal Fair's office. To discuss discipline for the student fight he then went to Discipline Dean Heald's office, who was with assistant principal Donovan and she explained what had happened when Y fought herself free of her restraint, lunged to get back in the fight and exposed herself. Donovan advised that faculty member Matt Jones had pulled the surveillance footage on his desktop. Jones was not in and Layfield pulled the time stamp and camera and went to view it on his desktop, which he did.

Four times later that day, Dr. Layfield, as building principal, reviewed the surveillance video with faculty members who were invited into his office to view the footage on his computer with him.

(1.) During first period, about 7:25 to 8:20 am, about 5 teachers came to him and asked what was going on since **two radio calls** for help had gone out during the fight. Dr. Layfield showed them the footage 2-3 times as this is common practice to keep all staff informed and safe about the dangers posed by school fights. Assistant principal Oliphant arrived shortly thereafter and she also was shown the surveillance footage of the problem at the start of her work day, for the same reason.

(2.) Around 9:45 am DSP Trooper Hudson, who originally was on site for that criminal investigation, was reviewing the origins of the fight, and he was shown the footage also, to assist in his law enforcement investigation. His need to see it is self evident, he is law enforcement on the scene of the disturbance.

(3.) Around 12:30 pm three other staff members, including an interventionist dealing with discipline, and a teacher along a hallway near the fight, asked to see the fight and were shown it, for the same reason stated above, to keep them informed and safe about school dangers and dangerous individuals.

(4.) Last, around 3:45 pm Dr. Renee Jerns of the central office and assistant principal Donovan asked to see and were shown the footage. Jerns was on site for a discipline proceeding and was assisted by Donovan that day, who both came to Dr. Layfield to report on the discipline proceeding. Then Dr. Layfield told them to look here at another problem that broke out this very day, since the problem of dealing with fights is within Jerns' job duties.

“On May 22nd my client was placed on administrative leave, now 12 weeks ago. In my own opinion, after dealing with 5 decades of employment and civil rights disputes with public officials here in Delaware, I suspect that this is politically motivated either internally at the school or at the central office,” stated Neuberger.

Dr. Layfield reports that there have been countless fights where surveillance camera

footage is shared with staff members to keep the school safe and protect students from further fights. Again, this is done to keep staff informed and safe on school dangers, and to identify participants in the fights who are often unnamed and get away.

A 2018-19 video surveillance also recorded a blind sided attack in the school which was prevented by Dr. Layfield, which then became a teaching video throughout the district on how to keep students safe.

Dr. Layfield also advises that there is no policy or training in the district on viewing surveillance camera footage, so why is he being criticized? And the privacy FERPA law does not affect circulation to staff of fights, either.

“All this having been said, if the district believes it somehow was an abuse of discretion for my client on four occasions to show this video that day, warn him and put a letter in his file and return him to his duties. And clear his good name. STOP THE RUMORS!” said Neuberger. “Dr. Layfield petitions the school board, under the First Amendment, for the redress of this grievance imposed on him, a respected long term member of the Sussex County community,” he added.

Dr. Layfield is represented by Thomas Neuberger of The Neuberger Firm, Thomas can be reached at 302-383-1040.