

***Before the School Ethics Commission***  
***Docket No.: C35-25***  
***Decision on Probable Cause***

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**Martin Quinn,**  
***Complainant***

v.

**Landette Jeffrey,**  
**Middlesex Borough Board of Education, Middlesex County,**  
***Respondent***

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**I. Procedural History**

The above-captioned matter arises from a Complaint that was filed with the School Ethics Commission (Commission) on March 25, 2025, by Martin Quinn (Complainant), alleging that Landette Jeffrey (Respondent), a member of the Middlesex Borough Board of Education (Board), violated the School Ethics Act (Act), *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-21 et seq.* More specifically, the Complaint avers that Respondent violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)*, *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g)* of the Code of Ethics for School Board Members (Code). On May 21, 2025, Respondent filed a Written Statement.

The parties were notified by correspondence dated December 9, 2025, that the above-captioned matter would be discussed by the Commission at its meeting on December 16, 2025, in order to make a determination regarding probable cause. Following its discussion on December 16, 2025, the Commission adopted a decision at its meeting on January 27, 2026, finding that there are insufficient facts and circumstances pled in the Complaint and in the Written Statement to lead a reasonable person to believe that the Act was violated as alleged in the Complaint.

**II. Summary of the Pleadings**

**A. *The Complaint***

According to Complainant, on or about March 23, 2025, Respondent posted on social media under the username of “Laudie Laudie” in a community Facebook group titled, “You know you’re from Middlesex, NJ if...” The following is a copy of Respondent’s post:

As a BOE member, I respect and honor your right to hold differing opinions and expressed [(sic)] concerns about the BOE. Nonetheless, discussing my child’s or any other child’s personal education record is not permissible. Consider this a formal warning to act with respect and integrity. As a parent, it’s disappointing

that you would engage in any discussions about my child's personal educational information. I'm not here for this, nor is his legal representation. I hope we can resolve our issues and collaborate to ensure a better collective experience as a community.

Thank you!

\*this post is a reflection of my personal views and opinions and not of the BOE\* I don't speak for the BOE\*

The social media post had several comments by Respondent and other community members. In one comment to her post, Respondent stated “[s]orry if my post came off incorrectly. All I'm saying is do not discuss my child's person[al] educational information.”

Complainant asserts Respondent “invoked her authority as a [Board] member to threaten and discourage community speech regarding board matters.” Complainant further asserts Respondent violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)*, because she “exceeded her role as a [Board] member by issuing what she called a ‘formal warning’ to the community”; violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*, because she “acted independently and compromised the collective authority of the [Board] by unilaterally threatening the community” and violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g)*, because she “referenced her child’s educational records and invoked potential discussions of other children’s private educational information in a public Facebook forum.”

#### ***B. Written Statement***

Respondent notes that she posted on a general community site about “a personal parental concern involving individuals discussing her child’s educational record” and the website was not a District site nor was it associated with the Board. Additionally, she states that she included a disclaimer and the post did not involve Board business.

As to a violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)*, Respondent argues the Complaint does not demonstrate that Respondent took official action that was in conflict with her role as a Board member. Respondent notes her post was a “personal and private statement as an individual parent; there was no suggestion she was representing the Board at that point.”

Regarding a violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*, Respondent maintains she was “acting as a parent with respect to the Facebook post and did not in any way take private action that could compromise the [B]oard.”

Finally, as to a violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g)*, Respondent contends she was “simply reaffirming the need for confidentiality in matters involving students,” which, according to Respondent, is exactly what this provision recognizes.

In sum, Respondent asserts the Complaint “lacks probable cause” and should be dismissed.

### III. Analysis

This matter is before the Commission for a determination of probable cause pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:28-9.7*. A finding of probable cause is not an adjudication on the merits but, rather, an initial review whereupon the Commission makes a preliminary determination as to whether the matter should proceed to an adjudication on the merits, or whether further review is not warranted. Pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:28-9.7(a)*, probable cause “shall be found when the facts and circumstances presented in the complaint and written statement would lead a reasonable person to believe that the Act has been violated.”

#### *Alleged Violations of the Act*

Complainant submits that Respondent violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)*, *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g)*, and these provisions of the Code provide:

c. I will confine my board action to policy making, planning, and appraisal, and I will help to frame policies and plans only after the board has consulted those who will be affected by them.

e. I will recognize that authority rests with the board of education and will make no personal promises nor take any private action that may compromise the board.

g. I will hold confidential all matters pertaining to the schools which, if disclosed, would needlessly injure individuals or the schools. In all other matters, I will provide accurate information and, in concert with my fellow board members, interpret to the staff the aspirations of the community for its school.

Pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:28-6.4(a)*, a violation(s) of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)*, *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g)* need to be supported by certain factual evidence, more specifically:

3. Factual evidence of a violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)* shall include evidence that Respondent took board action to effectuate policies and plans without consulting those affected by such policies and plans, or took action that was unrelated to Respondent’s duty to (i) develop the general rules and principles that guide the management of the school district or charter school; (ii) formulate the programs and methods to effectuate the goals of the school district or charter school; or (iii) ascertain the value or liability of a policy.

5. Factual evidence of a violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)* shall include evidence that Respondent made personal promises or took action beyond the scope of her duties such that, by its nature, had the potential to compromise the board.

7. Factual evidence of a violation of the confidentiality provision of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g)* shall include evidence that Respondent took action to make public, reveal or disclose information that was not public under any laws, regulations or court orders of this State, or information that was otherwise confidential in accordance with board policies, procedures or practices. Factual evidence that Respondent violated the inaccurate information provision of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g)* shall include evidence that substantiates the inaccuracy of the information provided by Respondent and evidence that establishes that the inaccuracy was other than reasonable mistake or personal opinion or was not attributable to developing circumstances.

At the outset, as the Complaint involves allegations involving a social media post, the Commission finds it necessary to set forth the standard for when Board member involvement in social media implicates the Act. The Commission has explained that in order for a social media post to be offered pursuant to official duties, there must be a sufficient nexus between the social media page and the role/membership on the Board. *Hodrinsky v. Faussette, Hasbrouck Heights Board of Education, Bergen County*, Docket No. C11-21 (August 30, 2021). As the Commission explained in *Aziz v. Nikitinsky et al., Monroe Township Board of Education, Middlesex County*, Docket No. C56-22 (October 17, 2022)

... Although social media activity by a school official can be regarded as action [*I/M/O Treston, Randolph Township Board of Education, Morris County*, Docket No. C71-18 (April 27, 2021) and *Kwapniewski v. Curioni*, Lodi Board of Education, Bergen County, Docket No. C70-17 (December 17, 2019)], it is only when certain competent and credible factual evidence is proffered therewith that a violation can be substantiated.

As a general matter, a school official does not violate the Act merely because he/she engages in social media activity. Instead, the Commission's analysis is guided by whether a reasonable member of the public could perceive that the school official is speaking in his or her official capacity or pursuant to his or her official duties. Whether a school official is perceived as speaking in his or her official capacity and pursuant to his or her official duties turns, in large part, on the content of the speech. If the speech in question has absolutely no correlation or relationship to the business of the Board and/or its operations and, therefore, could not possibly be regarded as a statement or position on behalf of the Board (as a body), a school official will not violate the Act. Conversely, if the speech in question does relate to the business of the Board and/or its operations, it is then reasonable for the reader to perceive the speech as being offered in an official capacity and pursuant to his or her official duties. Nonetheless, the filing party would still need to prove all elements of the cited provision of the Act...

Moreover, the use of a disclaimer on social media can help to clarify whether an individual is speaking in his or her official capacity and pursuant to his or her official duties; however, the presence of a disclaimer is not dispositive. ... The failure of a school official to parrot the exact language recommended by the Commission will not mean, without more, that he or she did not use an

appropriate disclaimer. In addition, if a school official utilizes an appropriate disclaimer, but the content or substance of the statements would still lead a reasonable member of the public to believe that the school official is speaking in his or her official capacity or pursuant to his or her official duties, then the disclaimer will be inadequate and of no force or effect, and the social media activity could violate the Act. See *I/M/O Treston*, Randolph Township Board of Education, Morris County, Docket No. C71-18].

Following its review, the Commission finds that even if the facts as asserted in the Complaint are proven true by sufficient credible evidence, they would not support a finding that Respondent violated N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c), N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e), and/or N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g). In this matter, the Commission finds despite the fact that Respondent referenced her Board membership, Respondent was not discussing Board business, but rather, her post was related to matters concerning her child and she included a disclaimer on her post. Accordingly, a reasonable member of the public would not perceive that Respondent was speaking in her official capacity or pursuant to her official duties as a Board member. As a parent, Respondent is allowed to comment or talk about matters involving her child, and her comments would not violate N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c) or N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e). Additionally, as to a violation of N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g), Complainant has not presented any information that suggests that Respondent's post included any confidential or private information, and therefore, a violation of N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g) cannot be substantiated.

Accordingly, and pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:28-9.7(b), the Commission dismisses the alleged violations of N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c), N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e) and N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g).

#### **IV. Decision**

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:12-29(b), and for the reasons detailed herein, the Commission hereby notifies Complainant and Respondent that there are insufficient facts and circumstances pled in the Complaint and in the Written Statement to lead a reasonable person to believe that the Act was violated as alleged in the Complaint and, consequently, dismisses the above-captioned matter. N.J.A.C. 6A:28-9.7(b).

The within decision is a final decision of an administrative agency and, therefore, it is appealable only to the Superior Court-Appellate Division. See, *New Jersey Court Rule 2:2-3(a)*. Under *New Jersey Court Rule 2:4-1(b)*, a notice of appeal must be filed with the Appellate Division within 45 days from the date of mailing of this decision.

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Robert W. Bender, Chairperson

Mailing Date: January 27, 2026

***Resolution Adopting Decision  
in Connection with C35-25***

***Whereas***, at its meeting on December 16, 2025, the School Ethics Commission (Commission) considered the Complaint and the Written Statement submitted in connection with the above-referenced matter; and

***Whereas***, at its meeting on December 16, 2025, the Commission discussed finding that the facts and circumstances presented in the Complaint and the Written Statement would not lead a reasonable person to believe that the Act was violated, and therefore, dismissing the above-captioned matter; and

***Whereas***, at its meeting on January 27, 2026, the Commission reviewed and voted to approve the within decision as accurately memorializing its actions/findings from its meeting on December 16, 2025; and

***Now Therefore Be It Resolved***, that the Commission hereby adopts the decision and directs its staff to notify all parties to this action of its decision herein.

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Robert W. Bender, Chairperson

I hereby certify that the Resolution was duly adopted by the School Ethics Commission at its public meeting on January 27, 2026.

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Brigid C. Martens, Director  
School Ethics Commission