

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

In the Matter of a Complaint by  
Bill Sweeney and the Willimantic  
Chronicle,

FINAL DECISION

Complainants

Docket #FIC84-215

against

April 10, 1985

Columbia Board of Education,

Respondent

The above captioned matter was heard as a contested case on January 25, 1985 at which time the complainants and the respondent appeared and presented testimony, exhibits and argument on the complaint.

After consideration of the entire record the following facts are found:

1. The respondent is a public agency within the meaning of §1-18a(a), G.S.
2. By letter of complaint filed with the Commission on October 19, 1984 the complainants alleged that an executive session conducted by the respondent during its October 15, 1984 regular meeting was not held for any proper purpose within the meaning of §1-18a(e), G.S.
3. While convened in executive session on October 15, 1984 the respondent discussed a letter dated October 5, 1984 from the Columbia Teachers Association (CTA) objecting to the respondent's policy of prohibiting all teachers from directly addressing the respondent at its meetings.
4. Upon reconvening in public session on October 15, 1984 the respondent voted to have its counsel meet with counsel for the CTA to discuss the issues raised in the October 5, 1984 letter.
5. The Columbia Teachers Association (CTA) is the exclusive bargaining representative for teachers employed by the Columbia school system. In September, 1984 the respondent and the CTA began negotiating a collective bargaining agreement, which agreement had not yet been finalized as of October 15, 1984.
6. It is found that the issue of teachers addressing the respondent at its meetings was a point about which the CTA and the respondent were, on October 15, 1984, engaged in collective bargaining.

7. It is further found that the respondent's discussion of the CTA's October 5, 1984 letter constituted strategy and negotiations with respect to collective bargaining and was therefore not a meeting within the meaning of §1-18a(b), G.S.

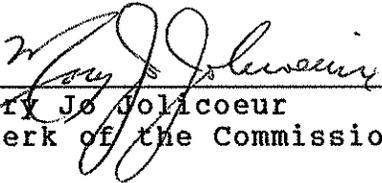
8. It is concluded that the respondent did not violate §1-21(a), G.S. when it denied the public access to its discussion of the October 5, 1984 letter from the CTA.

9. The Commission needs not address, therefore, the respondent's claims that the meeting was otherwise properly held in executive session.

The Following order by the Commission is hereby recommended on the basis of the record concerning the above captioned complaint.

1. The complaint is hereby dismissed.

Approved by order of the Freedom of Information Commission at its regular meeting of April 10, 1985.

  
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Mary Jo Jolicoeur  
Clerk of the Commission