

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

In the Matter of a Complaint by

FINAL DECISION

Nicholas Tella,

Complainant

against

Docket #FIC 2024-0381

Chairman, Board of Directors, Willington
Public Library; and Board of Directors,
Willington Public Library,

Respondents

June 11, 2025

The above-captioned matter was heard as a contested case on January 24, 2025, at which time the complainant appeared and presented testimony, exhibits and argument on the complaint. The respondents did not appear at the January 24, 2025 hearing. A continued hearing was held on April 11, 2025, at which time the respondents appeared and presented testimony, exhibits and argument on the complaint. The complainant did not appear at the April 11, 2025, continued hearing.

After consideration of the entire record, the following facts are found and conclusions of law are reached:

1. The respondents are public agencies within the meaning of §1-200(1), G.S.
2. By letter of complaint dated June 28, 2024, the complainant appealed to this Commission alleging that the respondents violated the Freedom of Information (“FOI”) Act when, on June 26, 2024, members of the respondent Willington Public Library (“WPL”) Board of Directors (“Board”), inappropriately convened a caucus to discuss a topic that was scheduled to be discussed during a public meeting later that evening.
3. Section 1-225(a), G.S., provides in relevant part that, “[t]he meetings of all public agencies . . . shall be open to the public.”
4. Section 1-200(2), G.S., defines “meeting” as follows, in relevant part:

[A]ny hearing or other proceeding of a public agency, any convening or assembly of a quorum of a multimember public agency, and any communication by or to a quorum of a multimember public agency, whether in person or by means of electronic equipment, to discuss

or act upon a matter over which the public agency has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power. . . .

“Meeting” does not include: Any meeting of . . . a caucus of members of a single political party notwithstanding that such members also constitute a quorum of a public agency.

5. Section 1-200(3), G.S., defines “caucus” as follows:

(A) a convening or assembly of the enrolled members of a single political party who are members of a public agency within the state or a political subdivision, or (B) the members of a multimember public agency, which members constitute a majority of the membership of the agency, or the other members of the agency who constitute a minority of the membership of the agency, who register their intention to be considered a majority caucus or minority caucus, as the case may be, for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act, provided (i) the registration is made with the office of the Secretary of the State for any such public agency of the state, in the office of the clerk of a political subdivision of the state for any public agency of a political subdivision of the state, or in the office of the clerk of each municipal member of any multitown district or agency, (ii) no member is registered in more than one caucus at any one time, (iii) no such member's registration is rescinded during the member's remaining term of office, and (iv) a member may remain a registered member of the majority caucus or minority caucus regardless of whether the member changes his or her party affiliation under chapter 143.

6. It is found that on June 26, 2024, at 11:25am, the following members of the respondent WPL Board, filed a form with the Willington Town Clerk noticing their intent to form a “Democratic Party caucus” on the WPL Board: KarenAnn Caldwell (D), JoAnne Taraskiewicz (D), Joy Wrona (R), and Jennifer Tehan (D).¹ It is found that each member individually signed this form.

7. The respondents testified, and it is found, that during all times relevant to this matter, none of the individuals identified in paragraph 6, above, were registered in more than one caucus, nor had any member rescinded their caucus registration during their current term of office.

8. It is found that after filing their intent to form a caucus, but before the June 26 public meeting convened at 7:07 pm, the individuals identified in paragraph 6, above, met to discuss at least one of the topics on the agenda for the June 26 meeting (the “June 26 caucus”).

¹ The Commission uses the abbreviations (D) and (R) following an individual's name to designate such individual's political party affiliation as a Democrat or Republican, respectively.

9. The complainant alleges that although Joy Wrona was included on the form filed with the Town Clerk noticing the intent to form a "Democratic Party caucus," her inclusion in the June 26 caucus was improper, because she did not change her "caucus affiliation" with the Town.

10. The Commission notes that the phrase "caucus affiliation" is not found within the text of §1-200(3), G.S. Accordingly, to the extent the complainant argues that Joy Wrona needed to change her "caucus affiliation," in addition to registering her intent to caucus with the WPL Board Democratic Party caucus, such argument lacks merit.

11. Moreover, §1-200(3), G.S., does not prescribe a specific form or manner in which members of a multimember public agency must register their intent to be considered a majority or minority caucus. The only requirement is that such registration "is made in the office of the clerk of a political subdivision of the state for any public agency of a political subdivision of the state." See §1-200(3), G.S.

12. It is found that the registration requirement of §1-200(3), G.S., was satisfied when the members of the WPL Board Democratic Party caucus filed the form described in paragraph 6, above, with the Town Clerk.

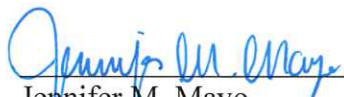
13. Based on the foregoing, it is found that the June 26 caucus, consisting of the individuals identified in paragraph 6, above, was properly convened.

14. It is therefore concluded that the respondents did not violate the meetings provisions of §§1-200(2) and 1-225, G.S.

The following order by the Commission is hereby recommended on the basis of the record concerning the above-captioned complaint:

1. The complaint is dismissed.
2. While §1-200(3), G.S., does not contain provisions concerning the naming of caucuses, the Commission cautions the respondents to use politically neutral names (i.e., majority or minority caucus) when naming a caucus consisting of members different political parties. Doing so may alleviate future concerns similar to those expressed by the complainant in the instant matter.

Approved by Order of the Freedom of Information Commission at its regular meeting of June 11, 2025.

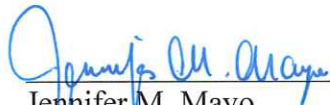

Jennifer M. Mayo
Acting Clerk of the Commission

PURSUANT TO SECTION 4-180(c), G.S., THE FOLLOWING ARE THE NAMES OF EACH PARTY AND THE MOST RECENT MAILING ADDRESS, PROVIDED TO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION, OF THE PARTIES OR THEIR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE.

THE PARTIES TO THIS CONTESTED CASE ARE:

NICHOLAS TELLA, 49 Mirtl Road, Willington, CT 06279

**CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, WILLINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY; AND
BOARD OF DIRECTORS, WILLINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY**, 7 Ruby Road, Willington,
CT 06279



Jennifer M. Mayo
Acting Clerk of the Commission