

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

In the Matter of a Complaint by

FINAL DECISION

Ryan Salvas,

Complainant

against

Docket # FIC 2025-0541

Superintendent of Schools, Sterling School
District; and Sterling School District,

Respondents

June 24, 2026

The above-captioned matter was heard as a contested case on January 28, 2026 and March 27, 2026, at which times the complainant and the respondents appeared, stipulated to certain facts, and presented testimony, exhibits and argument on the complaint.

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. It is found that on June 20, 2025, the complainant sent an email to the Sterling Selectman's Office, blind carbon copied ("bcc'd") to the respondents, seeking copies of the following records:

Any and all administrative records, emails, notes, text messages, call logs, social media posts, Zoom meetings, memoranda, involving Victoria Robinson-Lewis, Lincoln Cooper, Susanne Tetreault that reference any of the following: Radical Roots Farm LLP, Ryan Salvas and Alycia Salvas, Feral/roaming/loose pigs, swine, livestock, cattle, 237/0 Newport Rd, Sterling, CT, 146 Buck Hill Rd, Canterbury, CT, Pine Hill Rd., any communications shared with or referencing the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, Bryan Hurlburt, USDA, FSA, NDDH, Heather Somers, Anne Dauphinais, Doug Dubitsky, Joe Courtney, Stephen Harding, APHIS, RI DEM, DESPP, RI DOT, Prosecutor's Office, SAVIN, NECCOG, Department of Health, NRCS, Livestock Conservancy, and other governmental agencies.

3. It is further found that in his email to selectman@sterlingct.us (i.e., his e-mail to the "Selectman's Office"), as described in paragraph 2, above, the complainant also bcc'd over 35

other email addresses which included e-mail addresses for various officials and offices for the Town of Sterling and the Sterling School District, including the respondents' Superintendent of Schools email address, tfriend@sterlingschool.org.

4. It is found that, by email dated June 25, 2025, the respondents acknowledged the complainant's request and stated:

The Board of Education is a separate legal entity from the Town of Sterling and the Board maintains no documents on behalf of the Town of Sterling. Furthermore, the individuals referenced in your request are not "personnel" of the Board of Education ["BOE"].⁸ Notwithstanding those facts, because the Board received a blind copy of your request to the Town, the Board treats your request as a request directed to the Board as well. The only responsive documents maintained by the Board include the **minutes of the Board's November 15, 2023 Board of Education Meeting** and a **letter dated November 16, 2023, sent to the State Police Troop D and NECCOG from Superintendent Friend**. These documents are available for you to pick up at the Board Office. . .¹

(Emphasis added.)

5. By letter of complaint filed July 1, 2025, the complainant appealed to the Commission, alleging that the respondents violated the Freedom of Information ("FOI") Act by failing to provide the requested records described in paragraph 2, above.

6. Section 1-200(5), G.S., provides:

'[p]ublic records or files' means any recorded data or information relating to the conduct of the public's business prepared, owned, used, received or retained by a public agency, or to which a public agency is entitled to receive a copy by law or contract under section 1-218, whether such data or information be handwritten, typed, videotaped, tape-recorded, printed, photostated, photographed or recorded by any other method.

7. Section 1-210(a), G.S., provides in relevant part that:

Except as otherwise provided by any federal law or state statute, all records maintained or kept on file by any public agency, whether or not such records are required by any law or by any rule or regulation, shall be public records and every person shall have the

¹ It is found that the records described in paragraph 4, above, pertain to an October 24, 2023 incident involving a school bus transporting children and taking evasive action to avoid a dead goat in the road. It is found that the October 24, 2023 incident and the November 16, 2023 letter alerting the State Police Troop D to the incident were discussed at the November 15, 2023 Board of Education Meeting.

right to. . . (3) receive a copy of such records in accordance with section 1-212.

8. Section 1-212(a), G.S., provides in relevant part that “[a]ny person applying in writing shall receive promptly upon request, a plain, facsimile, electronic or certified copy of any public record.”

9. It is concluded that the requested records, described in paragraph 2, above, to the extent they exist and are maintained by the respondents, are public records within the meaning of §§1-200(5) and 1-210(a), G.S.

10. It is well established that what constitutes a records request under the FOI Act is a question of fact within the Commission’s discretion and requires the exercise of administrative judgment. See Perkins v. Freedom of Info. Comm’n, 228 Conn. 158, 166 (1993).

11. Based on the facts and circumstances of this case and taking into consideration the respondents’ reply email of June 25, 2025, described in paragraph 4, above, it is found that despite the complainant bcc’ing the respondents, the respondents affirmatively treated that email as a records request directed to them.

12. It is found that, by email to the respondents dated July 15, 2025, the complainant requested additional records, including any call logs or reports related to an October 24, 2023 incident.

13. It is found that, by email dated August 21, 2025, the complainant requested any related video.

14. It is found that, by email dated August 21, 2025, the respondents emailed the complainant an audio recording of the November 15, 2023 BOE meeting and also stated that although the video was mentioned in the meeting, the respondents did not have the video or any other responsive records.²

15. It is found that, by email dated September 2, 2025, the respondents emailed the complainant and stated, “we have provided all of the information that we have here, and we have answered all questions.”

16. At the contested case hearing on this matter, the complainant acknowledged that the respondents provided him with responsive records but contended that they had failed to provide all records responsive to the request described in paragraph 2, above. The respondents contended that they had provided all records responsive to the complainant’s request that they maintained.

17. The respondents’ Information Technology (“IT”) Director testified, and it is found, that he ran searches for responsive electronic records using the terms provided by the

² It is found that the subsequent requests, described in paragraphs 12 and 13, above, were made after the filing of the complaint and were not raised within the scope of the complaint, and therefore are not before the Commission. It is also found that while the requested video was also outside the scope of the complaint, the respondents attempted to locate a copy of the video, but it appears to no longer exist.

complainant and described in paragraph 2, above. The IT Director also testified, and it is found, that the records located, responsive to the request, were the same records already provided to the complainant: the minutes from the BOE November 15, 2023 meeting and the letter sent to Troop D from Superintendent Friend, described in paragraph 4, above.

18. The IT Director further testified, and it is found, that he checked agency-issued cell phones but did not locate any responsive records.

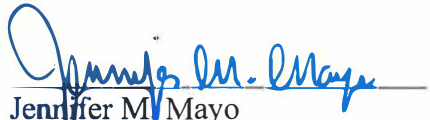
19. Based on the foregoing, it is found that the respondents conducted a reasonable and diligent search and provided the complainant with a copy of all records that they maintained that are responsive to the complainant's request described in paragraph 2, above.

20. It is therefore concluded that the respondents did not violate §§1-210(a) and 1-212(a), G.S., as alleged in the complaint.

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 June 24, 2026.

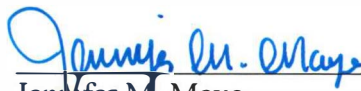

Jennifer M. Mayo
Acting Clerk of the Commission

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:

RYAN SALVAS, Radical Roots Farm, LLP, 146 Buck Hill Road, Canterbury, CT 06331

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, STERLING SCHOOL DISTRICT; AND STERLING SCHOOL DISTRICT, c/o Attorney Daniel P. Murphy, Kaimen, Escalera & McHale, P.C., 21 Oak Street, Suite 601, Hartford, CT 06106



Jennifer M. Mayo
Acting Clerk of the Commission