

Investigation Summary Presented to the Litigation Committee of the Onslow County Board of Education

May 26, 2022

I. Introduction

In February 2022, Poyner Spruill, LLP was retained by the Litigation Committee of the Onslow County Board of Education to conduct an external and independent investigation into the following:

- a. **Allegation 1:** Complaints of harassment by Board member Russell Eric Whitfield against an Onslow County Schools employee, Kelli Muse, and community member, Kristen Greer; and
- b. **Allegation 2:** Allegations that Board member Melissa Oakley acted together with Kelli Muse to allege charges of harassment against Board member Russell Eric Whitfield and to file civil and criminal charges against Mr. Whitfield for cyberstalking.

II. Investigation

Rebecca Williams and Grace Pennerat, attorneys from the law firm Poyner Spruill, LLP, conducted the investigation, beginning in early February 2022. As part of the investigation, they reviewed over 5,500 documents, including emails, videos, social media posts, and text messages, and interviewed eight (8) individuals; however, Mr. Whitfield did not agree to be interviewed, stating that he was legally prohibited from discussing the matter with anyone until April 10, 2023.

III. Relevant Investigative Findings

- a. Mr. Whitfield personally met with Kelli Muse to investigate her complaints regarding the CTE department at Onslow County Schools.
- b. Mr. Whitfield's and Ms. Muse's relationship deteriorated, resulting in both posting videos online about their experiences with each other. In some of the videos, Mr. Whitfield uses harsh language to refer to Ms. Muse and Ms. Greer.
- c. Mr. Whitfield authored at least two books about the interactions he had with Kelli Muse: (1) Onslow/Craven Facebook Scandal Chronicle of Kelli Muse's Defeat; and (2) Onslow/Craven Facebook Scandal Chronicle of Kelli Muse's Defeat: Most times evil people win. Not this time. These books were available to the public on

Amazon.com. He also posted several videos on YouTube about Ms. Muse, Ms. Greer, and, presumably, Ms. Kylene Rose, another Onslow County Schools employee.

- d. On April 7, 2022, in Onslow County District Court, Mr. Whitfield was convicted of cyberstalking Ms. Muse, a class 2 misdemeanor. Specifically, he was found to have electronically communicated to Ms. Muse repeatedly, for the purpose of abusing, annoying, threatening, terrifying, harassing, or embarrassing her.
- e. The investigation revealed no evidence that Melissa Oakley worked with Ms. Muse in any capacity to allege any charges or claims against Mr. Whitfield.

IV. Conclusion

- a. **Allegation 1**: Complaints of harassment by Board member Russell Eric Whitfield against Onslow County Schools employee, Kelli Muse, and community member, Kristen Greer.

Mr. Whitfield violated Onslow County Board of Education Policy 2120, Code of Ethics for School Board Members. More specifically, Mr. Whitfield failed to “uphold the integrity and independence of the board member’s office” and acted with “impropriety in the exercise of the board’s and board member’s official duties” in his communications and interactions with former Onslow County Schools employee, Kelli Muse, and community member, Kristen Greer.

Additionally, Mr. Whitfield did not model civility to students, employees, and all elements of the community; did not refrain from investigating or attempting to resolve complaints received personally; did not avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest; and took private action that compromises the board or administration.

Mr. Whitfield’s activity on social media, including the posting of numerous YouTube videos about Kelli Muse and Kristen Greer, where Mr. Whitfield used derogatory and insulting language, clearly violates the Onslow County Board of Education’s Code of Ethics for School Board Members. In these YouTube videos, Mr. Whitfield used profane language such as “dumb bitch,” “stupid bitch,” “retarded,” and “shit” in a reenactment of his court hearing that he stated was fictitious.

Additionally, Mr. Whitfield violated Board Policy 2122, Role of Board Members in Handling of Complaints. Mr. Whitfield met with Ms. Muse on October 22, 2021, to discuss “systemic concerns” Ms. Muse had about Onslow County Schools. By

meeting with Ms. Muse, Mr. Whitfield did not refer Ms. Muse to the appropriate school administrator as required and, instead, met with Ms. Muse individually.

- b. **Allegation 2:** Allegations that Board member Melissa Oakley acted together with Kelli Muse to allege charges of harassment against Board member Russell Eric Whitfield and to file civil and criminal charges against Mr. Whitfield for cyberstalking.

This claim is unsubstantiated. The investigation provided no evidence to support the allegation that Melissa Oakley acted to allege charges of harassment against Mr. Whitfield or to file civil and criminal charges against Mr. Whitfield for cyberstalking.