



Criminal charges face LT

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Lackawanna Trail School Board members acknowledged Monday night they had been the subject of a criminal investigation.

Solicitor John Audi said that board member Joseph Strauch had filed a complaint through the Wyoming County District Attorney's office, alleging that an action in February revealed a Sunshine Act violation. At a school board meeting, the board had put forward a remedy that Strauch could take to satisfy a labor grievance against him.

Audi said Monday night, "We made a mistake. It was not criminal in nature. It was an error on our part."

He noted the board would take the proper action in the matter at next Tuesday's regular public meeting of the board.

Most of the board members used the work session to attack Strauch.

After the bills had been read at the front end of the meeting, board member Karen Rigard asked how much money had been expended in legal costs regarding issues the board has had with an alternate Trail website that Strauch had created before he was elected to the board last November.

Audi estimated the legal costs said around \$4,000.

"So we're having trouble finding money to send kids to Arts Alive, but we have money to pay legal bills," a frustrated Rigard said.

Fellow board member Michael Mould said he was angry about not being at the board meeting that was identified in the criminal charge.

"You chose not to ask me personally about my involvement," Mould said. "Had you done so, I could have reminded you I wasn't there."

He added, "The criminal charges represent a threat to a reputation that I have worked 40 years to build and I don't like it one bit."

He said he found it troubling and demeaning that Strauch occasionally presents himself and his take on issues as where rules are broken, sometimes just grammatical things.

"We're all here for the at Lackawanna Trail School District," Mould said. "This sidebar stuff appears that somebody is trying to take down the institution and/or the school board. What exactly are you trying to achieve?"

Area resident Missy Bower said she had been at school board meetings the last 17 years, and has trouble sorting out what's going on.

"It feels to me you have an ax to grind," she said. "Please get your grinding done."

Strauch said there was no axe.

In other business, Rigard submitted to the board a letter of resignation because she would be moving out of the district April 30.

The board also noted that it had been conducting interviews in executive session for a new high school assistant principal and may be prepared to vote on the matter at its Tuesday meeting.