

Neshaminy school board investigating vandalism

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By Manasee Wagh

Staff writer

The Neshaminy School District has begun an investigation into vandalism of a teacher's car that occurred one day after the educator released a letter blasting the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers for using "fear and terror tactics" against union members.

The school board demanded the investigation on Friday after David Ferrara, a Neshaminy High School history teacher and football coach, reported on the NFT Facebook page that one of his car tires was slashed Thursday while parked at the school.

The Middletown Police Department confirmed Friday that a report was filed about the incident.

School board President Ritchie Webb sent an email to high school principal Rob McGee and Superintendent Lou Muenker on Friday calling for the investigation and the involvement of Middletown police.

"Please do an internal investigation and provide the board with a full written report regarding the vandalism to Mr. Ferrara's car. Every effort should be expended to assure Mr. Ferrara does not incur additional harassment or vandalism while at school," he wrote.

Webb gave the district a deadline to complete its investigation by the end of the day Monday.

Ferrara, a high school coach since 2005 and a Neshaminy teacher since 1996, reported that he's not alone in the alleged harassment by the union.

He wrote on the Facebook posting on Thursday that one NFT member received several written threats - including a death threat - left on his desk in a teachers-only area. He also reported in the posting that car vandalism occurred at several schools after individual NFT members questioned union officials or failed to demonstrate their full support.

"Cars were keyed, tires had screws put into them, tires were slashed, and windows were smashed in vehicles," he wrote.

The NFT Facebook posting was inaccessible Friday.

When asked about the validity of the incidents, NFT President Louise Boyd said she never comments on allegations.

Webb said he also wants the administration to look into the history of alleged threats and vandalism against other teachers over the past four years.

"Over the years we have gotten reports. One said their window was broken, another that a car was keyed. The problem is, I don't believe there were police reports for other incidents. Teachers are afraid of retaliation so they don't want to come out. We're going to try to figure (Ferrara's case) out first. Then, we're going to see if we can't get the administration to dig in at each building to report any incidents that have been reported to them. Looking into Ferrara's incident is as far as we can go at this point," he said.

Ferrara's letter accuses the NFT leadership of harassing or shunning teachers who have spoken out against union directives during the ongoing four-year struggle to forge a new teacher contract.



For example, some union members have disregarded the strictness of the NFT's work-to-contract instruction, and were intimidated by NFT members, Ferrara wrote.

The NFT leadership is keeping mum about the contents of Ferrara's letter.

Boyd on Friday said only that she echoes NFT spokesman Bob Schiers' Thursday response to the letter.

"I would just like to second his comments. They came from me," she said.

Schiers said the union will not comment on the contents of the letter, and that Ferrara is entitled to his opinion.

Ferrara declined to respond to an interview request Friday in an email.

"I have no comment at the present time for the media," he wrote.

In the aftermath of the release of Ferrara's letter, Neshaminy students started a "Ferraralander" page on Facebook in support of the teacher. It attracted more than 380 people by Friday mid-afternoon.

One message reads:

"Thank you Mr. Ferrara for speaking up. I admire your courage and hope that other teachers will feel more confident to think for themselves now that this has gained the community's attention. Please know that there are many people who care and would like to help you if you ever need it."

"Neshaminy school board investigating vandalism" [Bucks County Courier Times](#) 29 Jan 2012: A1