Superintendent rejects bill for note to AG

Attorney’s letter followed up on investigation

BY MARSHA SILLS
msills@theadvocate.com

Superintendent Pat Cooper informed School Board members in an email Friday that he will not approve charges for time their attorney spent drafting a letter to the Attorney General’s Office to get the bail rolling on an investigation into allegations board members have made against him.

The March 4 letter from the board’s interim general counsel, attorney Bob Hammonds, asks about the status of the board’s request to hire special counsel to conduct an investigation of Cooper.

The letter also clearly lays out what board members have not said publicly — the investigation is step one in laying the groundwork to fire a superintendent.

“The letter also clearly lays out what board members have not said publicly — the investigation is step one in laying the groundwork to fire a superintendent,” Hammonds wrote in the letter.

Without the ability to obtain special counsel to conduct such investigation, a school board is powerless to pursue disciplinary action against a superintendent no matter how egregious his/her conduct might be.”

The Attorney General’s Office approved the letter in April, however, the attorney hired for the investigation withdrew as special counsel about a week after requesting public records from Cooper’s office.

The board approved a second resolution at its meeting May 7 that names new special counsel and that resolution is pending approval by the Attorney General’s Office.
On Friday, Cooper wrote board members that Hammonds' March 4 letter was "improperly authorized, written and delivered," so he planned to withhold payment for the 1.5 hours that Hammonds billed the School Board for the letter and a conversation with board President Hunter Beasley about the letter. Hammonds' fee is $175 an hour, Cooper said.

"We're not going to pay because it wasn't authorized by us," Cooper said. "We don't know what he considered a pending request sent to the Attorney General's Office.

"What I don't understand is what Dr. Cooper thinks is wrong with that or is improper because again, we had sent in a resolution back in the summer last year and we had never heard anything back. It was a follow-up to see what is going on," Beasley said.

Board members and Cooper meet Saturday in a retreat to discuss issues they'll face in the upcoming school year, such as the impact of charter schools on the general fund.

"I don't understand what Dr. Cooper thinks is wrong with that or is improper because again, we had sent in a resolution back in the summer last year and we had never heard anything back. It was a follow-up to see what is going on," Beasley said.

The investigation by special counsel is not included in the resolution approved by board members in July nor on May 7; however, a public records request sent by former special counsel shed some light on what board members may be interested in.

The request included copies of board action related to the following issues: salaries and work days of principals; the creation of a special assistant to the superintendent's position and the position's salary and work days; and other management decisions.

The investigation by special counsel is not included in the resolution approved by board members in July nor on May 7; however, a public records request sent by former special counsel shed some light on what board members may be interested in.

The request included copies of board action related to the following issues: salaries and work days of principals; the creation of a special assistant to the superintendent's position and the position's salary and work days; and other management decisions.

"We're not going to pay because it wasn't authorized by us," Cooper said. "We don't know what he considered a pending request sent to the Attorney General's Office.

"What I don't understand is what Dr. Cooper thinks is wrong with that or is improper because again, we had sent in a resolution back in the summer last year and we had never heard anything back. It was a follow-up to see what is going on," Beasley said.

Board members and Cooper meet Saturday in a retreat to discuss issues they'll face in the upcoming school year, such as the impact of charter schools on the general fund.

"I don't understand what Dr. Cooper thinks is wrong with that or is improper because again, we had sent in a resolution back in the summer last year and we had never heard anything back. It was a follow-up to see what is going on," Beasley said.

The investigation by special counsel is not included in the resolution approved by board members in July nor on May 7; however, a public records request sent by former special counsel shed some light on what board members may be interested in.

The request included copies of board action related to the following issues: salaries and work days of principals; the creation of a special assistant to the superintendent's position and the position's salary and work days; and other management decisions.

"We're not going to pay because it wasn't authorized by us," Cooper said. "We don't know what he considered a pending request sent to the Attorney General's Office.

"What I don't understand is what Dr. Cooper thinks is wrong with that or is improper because again, we had sent in a resolution back in the summer last year and we had never heard anything back. It was a follow-up to see what is going on," Beasley said.

Board members and Cooper meet Saturday in a retreat to discuss issues they'll face in the upcoming school year, such as the impact of charter schools on the general fund.

"I don't understand what Dr. Cooper thinks is wrong with that or is improper because again, we had sent in a resolution back in the summer last year and we had never heard anything back. It was a follow-up to see what is going on," Beasley said.

The investigation by special counsel is not included in the resolution approved by board members in July nor on May 7; however, a public records request sent by former special counsel shed some light on what board members may be interested in.

The request included copies of board action related to the following issues: salaries and work days of principals; the creation of a special assistant to the superintendent's position and the position's salary and work days; and other management decisions.

"We're not going to pay because it wasn't authorized by us," Cooper said. "We don't know what he considered a pending request sent to the Attorney General's Office.

"What I don't understand is what Dr. Cooper thinks is wrong with that or is improper because again, we had sent in a resolution back in the summer last year and we had never heard anything back. It was a follow-up to see what is going on," Beasley said.

Board members and Cooper meet Saturday in a retreat to discuss issues they'll face in the upcoming school year, such as the impact of charter schools on the general fund.

"I don't understand what Dr. Cooper thinks is wrong with that or is improper because again, we had sent in a resolution back in the summer last year and we had never heard anything back. It was a follow-up to see what is going on," Beasley said.