

To our North Kingstown School Families and Community,

Like you, we the members of the North Kingstown School Committee, have been grappling with a multitude of emotions surrounding the ongoing media coverage concerning Aaron Thomas. We want to be as open as the law allows when it comes to the details surrounding the non-renewal of Aaron Thomas's contract in February of 2021. We recognize this statement cannot answer all questions, and we acknowledge that there is still information we need to learn.

As school committee members we are responsible for following all current state and federal laws and regulations. We are also responsible for the welfare of the students attending the North Kingstown public schools. This is something we are acutely aware of with every decision we make.

We assure you that the district is also concerned with providing support and closure to any of our students and their families who may have been affected. We also urge any adults in the community who may have been affected to seek out counseling as needed.

In February 2021, the North Kingstown School Committee commissioned an independent investigation into Aaron Thomas's conduct and to date, the school committee is unaware of any information that indicates that any member of the administration acted inappropriately with regards to this investigation. Nevertheless, in the interest of full transparency, the school committee has voted to continue the investigation to determine if any actionable information regarding violation of district policies came to the attention of the district administration prior to 2021, and if so what, if any, appropriate action was taken.

To that end we are providing the following facts:

- In 2018, the North Kingstown School Department received information from a former student who wished to remain anonymous that Mr. Thomas was conducting "fat testing" in his office. The individual said he was not naked during the test but found the test unusual and declined to provide any other information when questioned about the incident. Aside from feeling uncomfortable, the individual did not allege that any inappropriate contact occurred at the time. The superintendent, high school principal, and athletic director met with Mr. Thomas. Mr. Thomas was told of the allegation and was instructed that any testing of athletes be done in the locker rooms, with at least two adults present. As part of the 2021 investigation, the superintendent called this former student and left a voicemail in an attempt to reestablish communication with him and to provide him with contact information for the district's independent investigator. The superintendent and investigator received no response.
- On February 12, 2021 a separate former student notified district administration of Aaron Thomas conducting "fat testing" with him in 2006, alone in Mr. Thomas's office, while the student was naked. The student also alleged that Mr. Thomas touched him inappropriately in at least one of those sessions. Based upon this allegation, the school administration immediately removed Mr. Thomas from his duties as a coach and teacher

at North Kingstown High School and placed him on administrative leave. The North Kingstown Police Department was then notified of the allegation and asked to investigate.

- At a special School Committee meeting on February 24, 2021, the North Kingstown School Committee voted to terminate the employment of Mr. Thomas, effective at the end of the school year (this is the only option available to a school committee under Rhode Island state law, RIGL 16-13-3(a)).
- The School Committee hired attorney Michael Oliverio to independently investigate the alleged activities over the years of Mr. Thomas' employment. The investigator's requests to interview Mr. Thomas were declined, and he refused to cooperate with the investigation. The former student who made the initial allegation also declined requests to be interviewed.
- Mr. Oliverio's initial investigation determined that while the allegations could not be confirmed, there was enough testimony to credibly conclude that Mr. Thomas acted inappropriately and without parental consent.
- On June 24, 2021, Mr. Thomas, while on administrative leave and aware his contract had been terminated effective the end of the school year, resigned. The School Committee did not negotiate his resignation.
- Prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year, the RI Department of Education (RIDE) was notified of the circumstances of the resignation of Aaron Thomas.
- North Kingstown Police informed the school officials on September 1, 2021 that their investigation was complete and that they did not find any activity warranting criminal charges.
- The Monsignor Clarke School contacted the administration on their first day of school, September 1, 2021, requesting a recommendation for Aaron Thomas. No recommendation was provided by any administrator at the North Kingstown School Department.
- We urge anyone with additional information to contact the police and the North Kingstown School Department.

We, as a School Committee, are committed to the safety of our students and to open and honest communication with our families. We know that the teachers, staff and administration of the North Kingstown School Department remain dedicated to your children, their learning and well-being.

Sincerely,
The North Kingstown School Committee

Gregory Blasbalg, Chairman
Lisa Hildebrand, Vice-Chairperson
Jennifer Hoskins, Member
Jacob Mather, Member
Jennifer Lima, Member