

## [AG orders Mohawk Trail school to turn over records](#)

By MADISON SCHOFIELD, Staff Writer

Published: 02-27-2025 4:35 PM

SHELBURNE — The Mohawk Trail Regional School District has been ordered to turn over records relating to an investigation into alleged misconduct by a staff member to the state attorney general's office.

The order comes after the office was asked to review an appeal of a public records request made by a parent seeking information on whether an instructor had an inappropriate sexual relationship with a student.

Shelburne Police Chief Greg Bardwell said a police investigation had proved no crime had occurred, and the allegation was just a rumor that “spiraled out of control.” The department was made aware of the allegation after the school counselor filed a 51A report with the Department of Children and Families alleging a potential case of child abuse. The student in question is over 18 years old so DCF passed the case to the Police Department for investigation.

The school district had denied the parent's request for its records in the case, citing an obligation to protect student privacy and personnel records. The attorney general's office will review the records and determine whether they are exempt from public record laws or if they will need to be released. “In order to facilitate a determination as to the applicability of the district's claims to withhold the requested records under Exemptions (a) and (c) of the Public Records Law, the district must provide this office with an un-redacted copy of the responsive records for in-camera inspection,” Supervisor of Records Manza Arthur wrote in the determination. “After I complete my review of the documents, I will return the records to your custody and issue an opinion on the public or exempt nature of the records.”

The parent of a student at MTRS requested any records the district had containing communications to and from, or referencing, a school instructor. In emails with the district, the parent states that his daughter informed him that the instructor had been removed from his position teaching at the Mohawk Trail Regional School due to allegations he had intercourse with another student.

“This first came to light when two students went to a counselor with third or fourth-hand information,” Bardwell said. “The school immediately pulled [the instructor] out of the classroom and asked him to leave the campus while they investigate.”

Bardwell explained that after questioning students, staff, the instructor and the young woman, he learned that the students that made the report had heard from classmates about the alleged affair, and those students had made that assumption after hearing that the instructor and the student were communicating outside of class.

The texts that students used as evidence that the instructor had been inappropriate with the student involved discussion of a potential internship opportunity. Bardwell said he was absolutely certain that no misconduct had occurred, and that if there had been any evidence of a crime he would not hesitate to pursue charges. The instructor “has not been found to have engaged in any misconduct,” he said.

Bardwell said the young woman and instructor were both distraught over the rumor, and wished the school had been more proactive in addressing it.

Bardwell has closed his investigation, having found no crime had occurred. The Berkshire District Attorney’s office then picked up the case for review. Julia Sabourin, chief of operations at the Berkshire District Attorney’s office, said the investigation is ongoing and due to a heavy workload the case is “still relatively fresh” at the office.

A parent’s original public records request for the school’s records was filed on Jan. 14, and denied by the school district. The parent appealed the denial to the attorney general’s office, which determined that the school district needed to provide the parent with a specific reason as to why the request was denied.

In its response, the district stated the records were exempt under the Massachusetts Public Records Law Exemption A, which includes police communications, and Exemption C, which applies to personnel and medical records.

The parent submitted a second appeal and on Feb. 21 the attorney general’s office determined that the school must submit the requested records to the office for a review, during which the attorney general will determine whether the records are exempt from public records law or not.

Bardwell said the young woman and instructor were both distraught over the rumor, and wished the school had been more proactive in addressing it.

Reach Madison Schofield at 413-930-4579 or [mschofield@recorder.com](mailto:mschofield@recorder.com)

*Source: <https://www.recorder.com/MohawkOrderedToTurnOverDocumentsToDA-59576974>*