

Gardner News
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From Page:
1
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³⁰⁰ Newspaper alleges that board violated KOMA

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The Gardner News has requested that Johnson County District Attorney Steve Howe investigate the USD 231 board of education for two alleged Kansas Open Meetings Act violations.

The complaint stems from a series of emails the newspaper received in which school board members discuss how to deal with open records requests from constituents.

The email chain, which *The Gardner News* alleges may constitute a serial meeting, discusses a request by Gardner resident Walter Hermreck for the district's official enrollment numbers.

In an email, board member Rob Shippy asked superintendent Bill Gilhaus to supply Hermreck the information. In response, Gilhaus carbon-copied all members of the board, not using their published district email accounts.

"After discussion with the board of education, it was determined we would always attempt to meet any reasonable requests for information in a timely manner; however, not at the expense of losing focus of our student's learning," Gilhaus

wrote to Shippy.

Shippy responded to Gilhaus' email, suggesting that the board, at a future meeting discuss how to handle open record requests.

Board member James Repshire responded to Shippy, copying all board members, saying Shippy's emails made him angry. He offered to meet with Shippy at a Baldwin City restaurant to discuss the topic in person.

Repshire's email garnered a response from board member Tresa Boden. She copied all members. The thread wraps with an email from Mark Grannel suggesting that the board meet in executive session to discuss what information the district is obligated to provide to patrons.

The board met in executive, or private, session at its next meeting in early November.

The Gardner News sent the string of emails, which can be read in their entirety on the newspaper's website, to Bryan Denton, an investigator for the district attorney's office.

In an email, Denton said he is working with the district attorney to determine if the emails violate KOMA.