



**J. Michael Clára**  
**Salt Lake City School Board**  
**District Two**

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DELIVERED VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Kristi Swett, President  
Salt Lake City Board of Education  
2256 South King Street  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84109

**Re: Demand for Full Disclosure**

Dear President Swett,

In reference to the Uintah Elementary Lunch-gate debacle, I am writing to ~~request~~ insist that the findings of the internal and the two external investigations commissioned by the Salt Lake City Board of Education be made public in their entirety!

**On August 8, 2014**, the board of education received the weekly memorandum from the Superintendent, which states the following (see attached photo):

*1. **Squire and Ostler Reports on September 2, 2014** - Since we were unable to confirm a special meeting date and time with all board members and closed session participants in August, we have now scheduled both independent/external reports to be received by the board on Tuesday, September 2, 2014. Dave Brown (Squire) will deliver his report starting at 4:00 p.m., followed immediately by Blake Ostler's report (Thompson Ostler & Olsen Law). We anticipate that the closed session will go from 4:00-6:20 p.m., with the board's business meeting starting at the regular time (6:30 p.m.). It is also anticipated that two public reports will be released at the beginning of the business meeting prior to the Consent Agenda.*

This smacks of yet another episode of a McKell public relations counter-offensive and the perpetuation of the very "cover-up" that I thought as a board, we were committed to exposing.

If past practice is any indicator, it now appears that the "Tetrad" (composed of you, the Board Vice-President Heather Bennett, Superintendent McKell Withers and Business Administrator Janet Roberts) will have already (or will) sanitize any reports coming before the School Board and then the public at the **September 2, 2014**, School Board Meeting.

**"Local school boards are the bedrock of our society, yet they are invisible to the public"**

Señor Florez -Deseret News

The stranglehold that this Tetrad (that you are a part of) has on the school district, is in my opinion, the source of poor decisions that do nothing more than demoralize employees and puts us as a school district, in a position of loosing all hope to ever regain the public's trust.

By way of illustration; it is deeply troubling and unacceptable that within the last 24 hours, information that does exist on this issue continues to emerge from the district office in dribbles.

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I was caught off guard on Monday, when upset teachers and parents began to leave me phone messages about why Ms. Shirley was not at Uintah Elementary. Later in the afternoon I read in the Tribune that Jason Olsen is quoted as saying that Ms. Shirley resigned "late last week". I sent an email to the Superintendent asking him why he did not inform the School Board of this development. In his reply he stated that he informed you and Heather Bennett.

This type of behavior reinforces the existence of a cover up, as information continues to be inconsistent and at times, misleading and even missing. This demonstrates a continued lack of commitment to transparency on the part of the current school district administration.

Moreover, you will recall back in February of this year, in response to the four of you making a decision in secret, about how to cover-up certain aspects of the lunch-gate, I was quoted as saying the following (see attached letter: 02/21/14 PR Firm Questions):

*"Board member Michael Clara also said ... 'We're here to educate children, not worry about our image, and that could have been solved had they dealt with this honestly in the beginning,' Clara said. He called it "devious" for the district to put out a request for proposals for \$1 less than what's required for full board approval. He said he wasn't aware of the request until he heard about it unofficially, not from the district."*  
(After Tossed Lunches, Utah District Eyes \$49,999 PR Hire –February 19, 2014, Salt Lake Tribune)

Additionally, the minutes of the March 4, 2014, School Board Meeting, in part reflect the following:

*Mr. Clara distributed a copy of his GRAMA Request regarding the Public Relations Firm, including the district's response and two articles that appeared in the Salt Lake Tribune. A copy has been added to the official minutes. He urged the board strive for transparency in all their dealings and that all board members be included in decisions.*

We are going to waste a lot of tax payer dollars if we allow the very people that are under investigation or those protecting them, to now have a hand in manipulating the conclusions of the external investigations.

Moreover, you will recall that prior to the public exposure of the Public Relations RFP debacle, which the four of you hatched; I had demanded that an outside investigator be brought in. In my letter of **February 14, 2014**, I in part, wrote the following (see attached letter: 02/14/14, A Call For An Independent Investigation):

*"I am sure you are aware that the community at large has lost confidence in the leadership of the district, as it appears that the bureaucracy is just protecting itself and has no interest in reaching the truth in this matter. This entire episode and the poor handling of its aftermath is an embarrassment to our city, community and school district. The rampant bully culture that allows an out of control bureaucracy to blame students, parents and lunch ladies must stop!"*



In that **February 14, 2014**, letter I demanded that an outside investigation be launched so that those responsible for the circumstances surrounding the lunch-gate issue would be identified and held accountable. It appears that the school administration has been unjustly hyper-focused on one individual in the hopes that attention would be diverted from the dysfunctional chain of command.

It is yet another form of stonewalling, to meet in secret about how to alter the findings of the investigations prior to their public release. The secret meetings I refer to are the ones that any member of the Tetrad has already had or will have with those conducting the external investigations and the planned closed door session of the School Board scheduled for **September 2, 2014**.

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There are procedures in place, to insure transparency and accountability, and members of the public have a right to expect them to be followed. Utah Code 52-4-204 states that a "*closed door meetings may be held if...*". The operative word is "**may**". Utah state law does not compel the School Board to hold a closed door session on this matter. I believe that the School Board becomes complicit in the cover-up already perpetuated by the school district administration if we agree to go into a closed door meeting on this matter.

I am here to challenge the selective amnesia and/or censorship of the school district bureaucracy which has enabled this process of governmental dishonesty and lack of accountability to flourish within this institution of education. As long as the Tetrad or a combination thereof, maintains its stranglehold on information, there will be no way to determine accountability in this matter.

As an elected official and a member of the governing body of this school district, I propose that we begin to rebuild the community's trust, by authorizing **the public release of the three mentioned investigations**. This allows the School Board to divorce itself of the cover-up; delay and denial tactics that are the hallmark of the current school district administration, a truly accountable and transparent government would expect and demand nothing less than this.

Shalom,



J. Michael Clára  
Board Member, District 2

cc: Open Letter  
Enclosures (3)

P.S. I recognize that you will most likely ignore this correspondence, as you are apt to do with community issues I bring to your attention. Or you will claim (as you often do) that you did not receive it. To that end, I have taken the liberty of sending a courtesy copy of this letter to others, as that seems to provide the needed motivation for you to at least acknowledge the existence of the communication.

