

# **Town of Williamstown**

## **Massachusetts**

*Municipal Building  
31 North Street  
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Williamstown Affordable  
Housing Committee  
Catherine Yamamoto,  
Chairman  
wmst.housing@gmail.com  
413-458-3500  
FAX 413-458-4839

June 28, 2013

Hanne Rush, Assistant Attorney General  
Division of Open Government  
One Ashburton Place  
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Ms. Rush:

This letter is in response to your June 18, 2013 letter regarding the Open Meeting Law violation complaint dated March 14, 2013 filed by Mr. Kenneth Swiatek against the Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee (AHC).

To summarize my responses to date:

1. April 25, 2013 letter to you in which I admitted the violation and related the public admission given by the acting chair of the committee at the April 24 AHC meeting (which I could not attend due to a family emergency), with copy of meeting agenda attached.
2. May 8, 2013 letter to you with copy of the Minutes of our April 24 meeting, at which we acknowledged the violation.

Per your request, please find enclosed copies of the February 12-March 4, 2013 emails that are relative to the complaint. I do not have copies of the responses from Ms. Shanks to either of my March 3 emails (my recollection is that she did not respond) or from the committee members to my March 4 message requesting that they respond to me about endorsing the Letter to the Editor, which was the basis of the complaint. It is my recollection that the members all responded in the affirmative and that all responses were succinct and contained no recommendations for revisions to the text of the letter, and hence all their names were attached to the letter when it was submitted to news media on March 4. These four messages from me to the committee and their affirmative responses as described above comprise the entirety of the correspondence related to this complaint.

Also per your request, here are the names and daytime phone numbers of the members of the Committee as it existed on March 4, 2013:

413.597.4646 Bilal Ansari  
413.458.4886 Charles Bonenti  
413.884.6158 Van Ellet  
413.458.8047 Cheryl Shanks  
413.458.9015 Leigh Short  
413.597.4363 Catherine Yamamoto

Also enclosed are the following documents that may be helpful to the resolution of this matter:

1. The Letter to the Editor as it appeared in four local media outlets.
2. March 12, 2013 AHC Minutes, which document that the Letter to the Editor was read, by me, as the chairman's opening statement at the next posted meeting following its publication.

In his initial March 14 complaint, Mr. Swiatek stated that "This violation indicates training on the open law is needed. The board should acknowledge their violation during an open meeting." I understand this statement as a request for one action: acknowledgement during an open meeting. In response to this request, the AHC acknowledged the violation at its next posted meeting after notification of the complaint, April 24.

Though Mr. Swiatek, in his May 31, 2013 letter to you, expresses dissatisfaction with 1) the committee's April 24 acknowledgement, 2) the day and time of the meeting, 3) my absence, 4) the absence of one other committee member, 5) lack of media coverage, 6) lack of attendance by the public, 6) his own inability to attend, and 7) failure to address his "recommendation that 'training is needed'", it is my belief that the requested response action, acknowledgement of the violation during an open meeting, has been taken.

If you have any questions or if further action on our part is called for, please contact me at any time.

Sincerely yours,

Catherine M. Yamamoto  
Chairman

cc: P. Fohlin, Town Manager  
J. Allen, Chair, Board of Selectmen