

Resolution Censuring Paul E. Coogan, Chair of the Fall River School Committee

And ;

Thomas Khoury, Fall River School Committee Member

WHEREAS, the Fall River School Committee is entrusted with the governance and oversight of the Fall River Public Schools and must conduct its duties with integrity, transparency, professionalism, and adherence to established policies and ethical standards; and

WHEREAS, members of the School Committee are required to follow the ethical standards outlined in School Committee Policy BCA – School Committee Ethics, which establishes expectations for the conduct of members in their relations with fellow committee members and with the community; and

WHEREAS, Policy BCA states in part that a School Committee member, in their relations with fellow committee members, shall not withhold pertinent information on school matters or personnel problems from members of their own committee, nor from members of other committees seeking assistance or information on school matters; and

WHEREAS, Policy BCA further requires School Committee members to uphold the intent of executive sessions and respect the privileged communications that exist in executive session, recognizing that disclosure of such confidential matters may damage the School Committee’s negotiating, legal, and operational interests; and

WHEREAS, Policy BCA also states that a School Committee member, in their relations with the community, shall accept the office as a means of unselfish service with no intent to “play politics” or to benefit personally from committee activities; and

WHEREAS, the School Committee must ensure that its meetings are conducted fairly and in accordance with established meeting policies, including Policy BEDH, which governs public participation and establishes procedures and time limits for speakers; and

WHEREAS, in early 2026, influential associates of Mayor Paul E. Coogan publicly hinted that a potential inquiry by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) into the Fall River School Committee might occur; and

WHEREAS, on February 11, 2026, the Fall River School Committee voted to discuss matters related to the contract of now former Superintendent Curley; and

WHEREAS, on February 17, 2026, Mayor Paul E. Coogan filed a complaint with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) requesting an inquiry into the Fall River School Committee; and

WHEREAS, at the time that complaint was filed, the members of the Fall River School Committee were not informed that such a complaint had been filed, and the Chair did not notify the committee that he had taken this action; and

WHEREAS, withholding such significant information from fellow committee members regarding a complaint to a state agency concerning the committee's conduct raises serious concerns regarding transparency, collegiality, and compliance with Policy BCA's requirement that members not withhold pertinent information on school matters from fellow committee members; and

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2026, the Fall River School Committee held a public meeting during which DESE Deputy Commissioner Robert Curtin was present in the building; and

WHEREAS, during that meeting, Mayor Paul E. Coogan announced that Deputy Commissioner Curtin was present to observe the meeting; and

WHEREAS, the presence of a high-ranking DESE official occurred on the same day the School Committee was scheduled to take an important vote; and

WHEREAS, at the time of the March 4, 2026 meeting, the members of the School Committee were still unaware that the Chair had filed a complaint with DESE on February 17, 2026 requesting an inquiry into the committee; and

WHEREAS, during that March 4, 2026 meeting, Mayor Paul E. Coogan permitted certain speakers to exceed the three-minute public comment limit while disenfranchising more than ten members of the public who wished to speak, actions that were inconsistent with the requirements and intent of Policy BEDH governing public participation at School Committee meetings; and

WHEREAS, on or about March 4, 2026, Mayor Paul E. Coogan gave an interview to Channel 12 in which he publicly commented on an upcoming School Committee vote and discussed matters relating to an anticipated executive session; and

WHEREAS, such public discussion of matters related to executive session deliberations risked harming the negotiating and litigating position of the Fall River School Committee, contrary to the obligation under Policy BCA to uphold the intent and confidentiality of executive session proceedings; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2026, the School Committee prepared to take another important vote regarding matters before the committee; and

WHEREAS, during that meeting, DESE Deputy Commissioner Robert Curtin was again present; and

WHEREAS, during the March 11 meeting, Mayor Paul E. Coogan announced for the first time to the School Committee that he had requested a DESE investigation in February, weeks after the complaint had been filed; and

WHEREAS, during that meeting, DESE Commissioner Pedro Martinez confirmed in a letter that the request for an inquiry had been made, and Deputy Commissioner Curtin stated that he was conducting a review and made comments related to the School Committee's vote; and

WHEREAS, the delay in notifying fellow School Committee members of the complaint and investigation created confusion, undermined trust among committee members, and interfered with the committee's ability to conduct its business with full knowledge of relevant circumstances affecting its work; and

WHEREAS, members of the School Committee and the public have raised concerns that the conduct of the Chair during these events demonstrated a pattern inconsistent with the standards of leadership, professionalism, and collaboration expected of the presiding officer of the School Committee; and

WHEREAS, the Chair of the School Committee bears a heightened responsibility to ensure meetings are conducted fairly, that policies are followed, and that all members are treated with respect and transparency; and

WHEREAS, concerns have also been raised regarding the conduct of School Committee Member Thomas Khoury; and

WHEREAS, on or about March 8, 2026, Thomas Khoury is alleged to have leaked information from an ongoing executive session, thereby disclosing confidential matters and potentially harming the negotiating or litigating position of the Fall River School Committee; and

WHEREAS, such disclosure of executive session information constitutes a violation of the ethical obligation to uphold the intent and confidentiality of executive session communications as required under School Committee Policy BCA and applicable law; and

WHEREAS, Thomas Khoury is further alleged to have made defamatory statements about multiple School Committee members related to those confidential matters; and

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2026, Thomas Khoury engaged in conduct during the School Committee meeting that has been described as unbecoming of a School Committee member, raising additional concerns regarding professionalism and decorum; and

WHEREAS, the Fall River School Committee has a duty to uphold the integrity of its proceedings and to ensure that members adhere to the ethical and procedural standards established by School Committee policy and by the expectations of the community it serves; and

WHEREAS, a formal expression of disapproval by the School Committee is warranted in order to reaffirm the importance of ethical conduct, transparency, and respect for established policies and procedures.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Fall River School Committee hereby formally censures Mayor Paul E. Coogan, Chair of the Fall River School Committee, for conduct inconsistent with the ethical standards and policies governing the School Committee, including but not limited to:

1. Failing to promptly inform fellow committee members that he had filed a complaint with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requesting an inquiry into the School Committee;
 2. Withholding pertinent information from fellow committee members regarding that complaint and investigation;
 3. Conducting actions that raised concerns regarding compliance with School Committee Policy BEDH governing public participation at meetings;
 4. Making public comments concerning matters related to executive session and an upcoming vote that risked harming the negotiating or litigating position of the School Committee; and
 5. Conduct that undermined the spirit of collaboration, professionalism, and transparency expected of the Chair of the Fall River School Committee.
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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Fall River School Committee hereby formally censures School Committee Member Thomas Khoury for conduct inconsistent with School Committee ethical standards, including but not limited to:

1. Leaking confidential information from an ongoing executive session;
 2. Making statements regarding those matters that may have harmed the negotiating or litigating position of the School Committee;
 3. Making defamatory comments regarding fellow School Committee members; and
 4. Engaging in conduct during the March 4, 2026 meeting that was unbecoming of a School Committee member.
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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this censure represents the formal condemnation of the Fall River School Committee and serves as a statement that the conduct described herein falls short of the standards expected of members entrusted with the governance of the Fall River Public Schools.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Fall River School Committee reaffirms its commitment to transparency, professionalism, ethical conduct, and adherence to its policies in the service of the students, families, educators, and residents of the City of Fall River.
