

Outreach

This document contains details of my outreach to those involved in the story.

Outreach log

- June 15 2023, 1:38pm, called BFW at 217-530-4283, no answer for Phillip Holthaus, mailbox was full.
- June 15 2023, 1:44pm, sent email to holthaus & his two colleagues @ bfw with shortened questionnaire
- June 15, 2:01pm, called Kent Metzger at (217) 413-3586, his cell gotten from email records. He directed me to contact Dr. Clark. & pushed, and he declined to comment.

Questions for Dr. Rochelle Clark

- Metzger received a proposal from BFW engineering on March 23rd. When did you, personally, become aware of this proposal & the associated structural issues?
- When did you communicate to the Board that there were structural concerns with Dennis Lab?
- Did you prompt metzger to seek out a proposal? If so, when?
- Why did the district wait until after the inspection to let the staff and students know that there were concerns?
- The district webpage says that on March 7th, "Superintendent and district administration attended another faculty meeting at Dennis, letting staff know we were still trying to get a structural analysis scheduled." Which staff knew an analysis was being sought? Is there an agenda, meeting minutes, and/or attendance record of this staff meeting?
- The district webpage says that concerns about "room shakes when music is played" were brought up at the February 7th staff meeting. During the June 13th press conference, you stated that this was brought up in mid to late April by a teacher, and was cause for seeking analysis. So was it February 7th, or mid to late April? Why are there conflicting statements about the timeline?
- Additionally, you stated "We just felt the best thing to do was get in contact with a structural engineer and have them look at the buildings as a whole". Klingner's reports show that only certain portions of the buildings were inspected - those portions suspected to have structural concerns. The documentation shows that the "buildings as a whole" were not inspected. Can you explain the conflicting information?
- Folks on facebook have criticized the District for subjecting children and staff to unsafe conditions for the time leading up to the May 30th inspection. Many folks seem upset that they weren't even aware until after the schools had been closed down. What will the district do in the future to ensure prompt and proactive transparency? Are there any policy proposals being discussed to ensure structural concerns like these will be brought to the public sooner in the future?
- Board Member Al Schneider said "Kent had, twice this year has gone through a full list of all the schools and what they were doing." What do you know about structural and building issues at the other schools? Can you provide documentation of those issues to me?

Questions for Phillip Holthaus, BFW Engineering

Hi, I'm Reed Sutman, a journalist for Decatur Vote, and I am recording this call. May I ask you a few questions about the Dennis Lab Schools in Decatur?

- From your analysis, do you believe the buildings can be repaired?
- Do you believe the staff and students were in danger for the months leading up to the closure?
- When did the district first seek you out for analysis? Who reached out to you? Was it by phone, email, or text?
- The District claimed that analysis was delayed because BFW was not available until May 30th. Is this accurate?
- Metzger asked on April 11th for an April 19th inspection, and email records in my possession show that you did not reply until April 27th, at that time asking for a new date. Was this delay your fault? What was the cause of delay?
- On April 27th, Metzger told you "We probably need to do the work sooner than later" and asked to "schedule the work for an afternoon next week". Why wasn't an appointment promptly scheduled for that following week?
- You told Metzger that your colleagues may be available the week of May 15th, and that you were available the week of May 22nd, but Metzger delayed until May 30th. Do you know why?
- Has the District asked you to attend the next School Board meeting to discuss your findings?
- Klingner & Associates provided a in-depth analysis of the structural issues. Do you know why BFW was not sought for this?

Questions for Kent Metzger

Broad questions

- When & how did you first become aware of structural issues at Dennis schools?
- When did you communicate this information to district leadership? (Dr. Clark, Dr. Curry, or another?)
- You received BFW's inspection proposal on March 23rd, but inspection was not completed until May 30th. What was the cause of the delay?
- Are you aware of structural issues at any other district buildings?

Detailed Questions

- Did Dr. Clark prompt you to seek an inspection proposal? If so, when?
- Board Member Al Schneider said "Kent had, twice this year has gone through a full list of all the schools and what they were doing." Can you tell me about that? Can you provide that list to me?
- Klingner's reports show that only specific areas of both buildings were inspected. Why were the full buildings not inspected?
- An HLS survey is required every 10 years. When was the HLS survey planned for Dennis & French?
- Klingner found previously inspected softening of the basement foundation, not likely related to the north stair. What do you know about that? When were those previous inspections completed?
- I'm not a legal expert. However, [23 Illinois Administrative Code 180](#) references "Regional Superintendent's Annual Building Inspection", which says that a course "by the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools" must be completed for those conducting the inspections of school property. Are annual inspections required? Who conducts them?

Timeline Questions

- Phillip Holthaus told you April 4th that he would look at his schedule and get back to you. On April 11th, you asked if he was available April 19th. He replied on April 27th asking if there was another date available. Did you speak with BFW engineering between April 4th and April 27th, besides those emails? What was the nature of those communications?
- What happened between April 27th, when you asked to "schedule the work for an afternoon next week" and May 15th, when Holthaus provided BFW availability between May 15th & May 26th? And why did you wait until May 30th?
- On April 27th, you told Holthaus "We probably need to do the work sooner than later". So when Holthaus suggested the 15th-26th, why did you postpone until the 30th?
- You received BFW's proposal on March 23rd, and replied on April 4th that you were waiting for a purchase order number. When did you get the PO & why did it take so long? Who was responsible for approving your PO?

Extra Questions

- Did you consider getting an inspection from a different engineering firm?
- Why did Klingner do the full inspection, and not BFW?
- What was the cost of the Klingner inspection?
- The 2013 HLS survey shows several cases of water damage to the Dennis building. Were these issues addressed since 2013?
- The Klingner reports show that several previous repairs had been completed. When were those completed? Who completed them? Why did those repairs not prompt further inspection? Can you provide documentation related to those repairs?
- On May 26th, your email stated that your mason and maintenance foreman are "knowledgeable about some structural issues". What are their names? How long did they know about the issues? When did they report to you about those issues? Are they available for interview?
- I heard from a student that Stephen Decatur has water leaks in the ceiling and at windows. What do you know about that? Is it being addressed?
- How serious are the structural problems? Was a stairway collapse or a roof collapse remotely likely? Were the kids and staff in danger?
- In August 2022, a student made public comment about gas leaks being unsafe at the Dennis building. Are there gas leaks at Dennis?
- What was the process for acquiring a proposal from BFW? Was there a public bidding procedure? When did you make the request for a bid?

Political questions

- Do you believe the district should have notified staff and families prior to BFW's inspection on May 30th?

Superintendent (Regional, Jill Reedy)

[23 Illinois Administrative Code 180](#) states "the regional superintendent shall prepare for the local board of education a written report" and "The report shall also be submitted to the State Superintendent".

- FOIA for these reports...
- I'm not a legal expert. However, [23 Illinois Administrative Code 180](#) references "Regional Superintendent's Annual Building Inspection", which says that a course "by the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools" must be completed for those conducting the inspections of school property. Are annual inspections required? Who conducts them?