

Reflections on last night's meeting

1 message

Michaela Burriss <burrissua@gmail.com>

Wed, Jun 14, 2023 at 6:43 PM

To: Nancy Drees <ndrees@uaschools.org>, Jenny McKenna <jcmckenna@uaschools.org>, Nidhi Satiani <nsatiani@uaschools.org>, Lou Sauter <lsauter@uaschools.org>, Lori Trent <ltrent@uaschools.org>

Upper Arlington School Board Members,

I write today in follow up to conduct and comments during last night's public school board meeting. I and other community leaders are hearing a great deal from our neighbors about it.

During a meeting last week with Board President Trent and Interim Superintendent Jenney, information was shared with me concerning the decision-making process of the Administration on the bathroom signage in the schools. I shared my disagreement on the legal assessment of risks. If I believed the issue before the Board was being made from a legal perspective, as opposed to a policy or values decision, I may have sent this email from City Attorney Shulman prior to your vote. It will be forwarded to you soon.

In essence, Board Member Satiani's proposal was worthy of merit.

Although a huge proponent of public education, and supporter of the district, I have exercised a great deal of caution in expressing my views on legislative matters before the Board. After last night's meeting, and hours of conversations with residents following the release of the agenda, it would be a dereliction of civic responsibility not to contact you.

Your role as Board Members is clear, both in Ohio law and in good governance. You are a check on the UA Schools Administration. You are an equal, and necessary, branch of a legally separate political subdivision. ORC 3313.47 vests your general authority while ORC3313.20 grants the board the power to "make any rules that are necessary for its government and the government of its employees, pupils of its schools, and all other persons entering upon its school premises."

Our voice is our vote. You are our votes, and therefore our voice. Your selection to the Board is to ensure representation of our community. It's to give the resident perspective in the decision-making of the schools, to set vision, and challenge/check our Administration when it is not aligned.

Comments suggesting that as a Board you can't make resolutions or changes to language within them is legally wrong and, as a policy matter, silences the voices of your neighbors. By relegating your resolution writing and amending authority and power to the Administration during last night's meeting, you disrespected the citizens of Upper Arlington. You disrespected me and every person who publicly and privately advocated for you to have power in the direction of this district. To be decision makers.

I am deeply angered by that suggestion - that there is nothing for you to do. That you are subjects, not policy-makers. Agreeing with your Administration is a policy decision. If that's the one you wish to make, stand by it. Throwing your hands in the air and saying you can't disagree is untrue and it most certainly does not absolve the Board of public consequences for decisions born out of your votes.

Furthermore, in a healthy democracy, debate and discussion are necessary. In no way should a community expect elected individuals to agree on everything and speak in concert with one another. The legislature is, by design, meant to facilitate compromise and consideration of a variety of perspectives. You are a legislative body.

The frequent and hostile interruptions of Board Member Satiani, not only from her colleagues but also from unelected staff, was shocking and appalling. That is not civility. That is not respectful debate. That is not a healthy democracy. That is not what I expect to see from my neighbors at a School Board meeting. Ever.

It is what I see everyday in the polarizing and most corrupt state legislature in the country where I work, and it is used as a tool of oppression. It is meant to silence minority view and shield elected officials from opposition. I saw no difference between statehouse politics of Ohio, and the elected officials who do not care about the sanctity of the institution, and our school board last night. None. And while I expect it there, I don't like it, making it absolutely unacceptable for me to see it here in UA.

What makes this especially egregious conduct was that it came moments after public comment from a black member of our community, who rightly reminded the Board that this has happened before. You were told, just moments previously, how it made him feel as a person of color raising a child of color in the district. Were you listening to him? Did you care enough to reflect on his words? You must not have - because it happened again.

At that Board meeting, Member Satiani was interrupted, repeatedly, during a discussion around facilitating safe spaces for people of color and families of other marginalized students in the district during the Superintendent search. This discussion included comments that disgustingly, and falsely, equated affiliation with local political groups to being black or gay, assertions that are a far cry from the Board's stated commitment to and understanding of DEI.

While I was grateful to hear Board Member McKenna's correction on achieving equity, it hardly resolved the horror felt by many in this community following that meeting, including my own. An elected woman of color began to describe why people like her need them, safe spaces for discussion, and was interrupted in the middle of sharing her lived experience. This Board and its behavior proved her point right at the 1:59 mark.

Board leadership is aware of the public reaction to that meeting in September. These reactions were shared privately, and they were shared during last night's Board meeting from a member of our community. You knew how it was perceived, both in the past and real time, and yet it was repeated.

Our residents saw it, lived it, and had visceral reactions then and again last night. I regret not speaking out in the past. I trusted it to be an isolated incident, that would be corrected. My trust is shattered.

I am extremely uninterested in backstories about your personal relationships with one another or observations about the way you each govern and your disagreements on those choices. Myself and the general public are not your referees. It would hurt me to hear it, but it wouldn't matter if you outright hated each other. It was a choice, or a lack of self control, to bring those feelings into a public meeting. You are responsible for your own actions are acactions to what you hear on the dais in plain view of the public, in representation of our schools, our community and the institution. I'm not interested in blame shifting.

You are reighbors. You should be assuming good intentions about one another. This community should be able to feel your mutual respect and compassion for one another. Instead what I saw, and what is plain for anyone to see, is that the majority of this Board are incapable of behaving like adults. That you're uninterested in the voice of your colleague. That you don't respect it.

Again - our votes are our voice. When you silence one another, you silence the representation brought to this governing body by the same people who gave you your seat. You threaten democracy and the safe exchange of ideas. That meeting is an offense to decency and civility. The resulting hurt is being felt and shared throughout UA right now.

Rather than embracing the very different perspectives you each bring to the table, and potential solutions you offer to problems within the district, you sought instead to control and silence an elected member of our community. Because that happened, as it has before, I will be devoting considerable time comforting residents who are shaken after witnessing it. I am mad that is necessary. I am angry I have to devote time to that. If you're wondering why you haven't heard from these people directly, think back on the unapproachability displayed in your meetings. You'll have your answer.

Just weeks ago, Council debated the elimination of four tennis courts at Northam Park, a historically contentious issue. Did any of my colleagues feel silenced or disrespected as Board Member Satiani must have? No. Why? Because we respected debate. I spoke for 12 minutes uninterrupted about the decision making behind my vote. I want to emphasize this: not once, during 12 minutes of speaking, did a colleague interject or cut me off. There was passionate disagreement about the direction to take, but never disrespect. I promise you, your neighbors know the difference, and they've seen elected bodies in this community behave accordingly.

In conclusion, I hope for an honest reflection on last night from each of you, especially from those whose impulse and emotional control most negatively impacted the civility of dialogue our community expects and demands. Please consider issuing an acknowledgment and/or apology of/for the hurt you've caused, the time it has taken from many (like myself), and how exactly you will ensure it never happens again. There are real people, myself included, at the end of your decisions and behaviors.

I thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from each of you.

Sincerely,

Michaela Burriss, Esq. she/her Council Member Upper Arlington City Council



for UPPER ARLINGTON CITY COUNCIL

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Fwd: BBA Case No. 20-0051

3 messages

Michaela Burriss <mburriss@uaoh.net>

Wed, Jun 14, 2023 at 7:24 PM

To: "itrent@uaschools.org" < ltrent@uaschools.org", "indrees@uaschools.org" < ndrees@uaschools.org", "jmckenna@uaschools.org" <jmckenna@uaschools.org>, "nsatiani@uaschools.org" <nsatiani@uaschools.org>, "isauter@uaschools.org" <lsauter@uaschools.org</p>

MICHAELA BURRISS | she, her, hers

Member | Upper Arlington City Council

The City of Upper Arlington

3600 Tremont Road, Upper Arlington, OH 43221

c: 440-281-2346

e: mburriss@uaoh.net | upperarlingtonoh.gov

From: Darren Shulman <dshulman@uaoh.net> Sent: Tuesday, June 13, 2023 3:08:28 PM To: Michaela Burriss <mburriss@uaoh.net> Cc: Steven Schoeny <sschoeny@uaoh.net>; Roger Eastep <reastep@uaoh.net> Subject: BBA Case No. 20-0051

Michaela,

The attached document (Final Order) has the Final Order of the Board of Building Appeals. As you can see, it simply says they granted the variance. The variance itself can be found in the attached case file (pdf page 7 of 54). The letter requests a variance from the requirement that "separate facilities shall be provided for each sex." Later, the letter requests a variance "to allow for unisex toilet rooms."

My reading of the documents is the variance allows the school to have unisex bathrooms but does not require all the bathrooms to be unisex. As such, if the school wanted to have male, female, and unisex bathrooms at Windermere, we believe it would be permissible under the variance as issued for Windermere. This is offered with the caveat that we pulled the records and read as much as we could today, but there's always a chance there's something else we didn't review that could alter this interpretation. If the school is interested in pursuing that route, we would be happy to work with them to make sure we are on the same page.

If you would like to share this information with members of the school board, you can feel free to.

DARREN SHULMAN

City Attorney | City Attorney's Office The City of Upper Arlington 3600 Tremont Road, Upper Arlington, OH 43221 o: 614-583-5020 e: dshulman@uaoh.net | upperarlingtonoh.gov



2 attachments

Board of Building Appeals Final Order 7-13-22.pdf.pdf

20-0051 - Case File.pdf 2760K

Michaela Burriss <mburriss@uach.net>

Wed. Jun 14, 2023 at 9:58 PM

To: "ndrees@uaschools.org" <ndrees@uaschools.org>, Jenny McKenna <jcmckenna@uaschools.org>, "nsatiani@uaschools.org" <nsatiani@uaschools.org, "ltrent@uaschools.org, "ltrent@uaschools.

MICHAELA BURRISS | she, her, hers Member | Upper Arlington City Council The City of Upper Arlington 3600 Tremont Road, Upper Arlington, OH 43221 c: 440-281-2346 e: mburriss@uaoh.net | upperarlingtonoh.gov

From: Darren Shulman <dshulman@uaoh.net>

Sent: Tuesday, June 13, 2023 3:08 PM
To: Michaela Burriss <mburriss@uaoh.net>

Cc: Steven Schoeny <sschoeny@uaoh.net>; Roger Eastep <reastep@uaoh.net>

Subject: BBA Case No. 20-0051

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2 attachments

Board of Building Appeals Final Order 7-13-22.pdf.pdf 252K

20-0051 - Case File.pdf 2760K

Lori Trent ltrent@uaschools.org

Fri, Jun 16, 2023 at 7:08 PM

To: Michaela Burriss <mburriss@uach.net>

Cc: "ndrees@uaschools.org" <ndrees@uaschools.org>, "jmckenna@uaschools.org" <jmckenna@uaschools.org>, "nsatiani@uaschools.org" <nsatiani@uaschools.org>, "lsauter@uaschools.org" <lsauter@uaschools.org>

Hi Michaela - thank you for your email.

I understand you were disappointed in the Board's decision on Tuesday. While we did not anticipate this process taking as long as it has when the Board initially passed its resolution on restrooms in 2021, the reality is that the district has spent years in litigation to get just one variance for Windermere and, in order to get variances for other school buildings, would need to go to court again. Please keep in mind what the Board actually decided on Tuesday – to simply press pause on filing new litigation and to give the new administration some time to consider this, along with many other district priorities, in partnership with the Board. The Board's portion of the 2021 resolution on the benefit of the toilet rooms as designed was not changed.

With regard to the procedure of our meeting, I would ask you to watch again with a view towards parliamentary procedure. The limited interruptions in the meeting were made to keep the Board discussion in order and to comply with our own bylaws and our commitment to following Robert's Rules of Order. Every board member was given time to share their viewpoints on the restroom resolution. The first board member to speak provided viewpoints for approximately seven minutes, the next for approximately two minutes. After the second board member's points were made, the first speaking board member attempted to speak again and was reminded that all other board members must first have an opportunity to speak before members are permitted to speak again. Other reminders were made as points of order to recognize that there was a main motion on the table, and that motion was the point of discussion.

Regarding Dr. Satiani's proposal, of course it is worthy of merit. However, it was sent to the Board less than two hours before our meeting and without any legal review. The norms that we worked to develop collaboratively as a Board just within the last month expect at least 24 hours' notice for new items to allow our fellow Board members the respect of time to consider important matters such as this. The two items in Dr. Satiani's proposal were to (1) implement a different type of signage at Windermere (boys, girls, and universal use) that has not been vetted for efficacy, efficiency, or legality under the current varience; and (2) create opportunities for community feedback and update the community on future action taken. All of us expect that our new superintendent will indeed pick this issue back up, but as a Board we do not expect that to happen on day one and so we needed to make that clear given our prior resolution's directives otherwise.

Finally, you are mistaken if you have the impression that the Board feels that it cannot draft resolutions on its own or change language at meetings. We have done so on numerous occasions. However, at Tuesday's meeting, after a thorough discussion including all five members, four of our five Board members decided to pass the resolution as published in our agenda. Our Code of Ethics, developed by the Ohio School Boards Association and adopted by the Board in Bylaw 0123 – Code of Ethics/Code of Conduct, says that a board member is expected to agree to express their personal opinions but, once the Board has acted, accept the will of the majority. I imagine the City has a similar Bylaw.

Thanks again for emailing with your concerns.

Sincerely,

Lori

[Quoted text hidden]

Lori Trent (she/her) President, Upper Arlington Board of Education 614-214-0112 Cell



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Civility Needs to be Restored

3 messages

Ukeme Awakessien Jeter <uawakessien-jeter@uaoh.net> To: "Itrent@uaschools.org" < Itrent@uaschools.org>

Thu, Jun 15, 2023 at 5:43 PM

Dear. Lori -

Yesterday. I woke up to a slew of messages each aghast at Tuesday's board meeting. Many directed me to watch from timestamp 1:51 - 2:17. I did. I cringed at what I saw. I can only imagine how those in attendance felt.

First, let me say that even with a student in the school district, I generally do not involve myself with things related to the school board. I do that because I respect that leadership-to-leadership we each govern in the capacity we are elected to. In the same vein, on the seldom chance community members reach out to me with a school board related concern, I direct them to talk to their school board members.

But, the messages I have received regarding Tuesday's board meeting were different. They were filled with fear. Trust is broken. Civility is questioned. They are looking for leadership. Bluntly, as a minority elected leader in this community, they are looking for the empathy of someone who shares their lived experiences. If a minority leader in the Dias can be treated the way they saw play out openly on Tuesday, then talk less of them.

I do not send this email to delve into any details on procedural rules and whether or not they were being followed because that should never be an excuse to not treat anyone in a respectful and civil manner. More, our community in attendance do not understand that nuance The conduct and civility of a meeting are solely the responsibility of the President presiding over the meeting - - that's you. There were interruptions not just from you, but other board members and staff. Unacceptable. If there is a misgiving on the procedural front, the only person to interrupt is you as the President. To put it simply, Lori, you showed poor leadership. I am upset and I am disappointed.

If our elected leaders cannot display civility towards each other, how can we expect the same from them?

Our community has worked hard to promote civility, and we have even held workshops and big table talks on the topic. https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/local/upper-arlington/2018/09/04/big-table-talk-focuses-on/10842596007/.

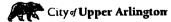
Good leaders take responsibility. I trust you will do the right thing and restore civility. Nidhi is owed an apology for how she was

If you would like to discuss this further, I welcome a phone call.

Respectfully. Ukeme

UKEME AWAKESSIEN JETER

Councilmember | Upper Arlington City Council City of Upper Arlington 3600 Tremont Road, Upper Arlington, OH 43221 e:uajeter@uaoh.net | c:614-285-7258 upperarlingtonoh.gov/city-council



City Council Meetings are held the first, second and third Mondays of each month (unless designated otherwise on the calendar). Meetings are held at the Municipal Services Center, 3600 Tremont Road, and typically begin at 7 pm. Council desires to hear the viewpoints of citizens. Please email city.council@uaoh.net if you are interested in addressing City Council.

Lori Trent ltrent@uaschools.org To: Ukeme Awakessien Jeter <uawakessien-jeter@uach.net> Fri. Jun 23, 2023 at 9:56 AM

Hi Ukeme - Thank you for your email.

I appreciate you sharing your thoughts and concerns with me regarding the school board's most recent meeting and I do wish to discuss those with you over the phone or in person. Can you share some times that you would be available, please?

With regard to the procedure of our meeting, I am sorry that you were disappointed in my leadership. I appreciate you recognizing though, that as the board's parliamentarian, I am required on occasion to interrupt for procedural reasons. There were certainly occasions at our meeting on July 13th where other board members spoke out of turn and I had to call points of order. This happened with Dr. Satiani and Mr. Sauter. It was not perfect for sure, but we worked through it. I am sure you can also appreciate that there were other issues involved that could provide some context.

We recently worked together as a board to develop norms for our meetings, one of which included that we would provide at least 24 hours' notice for new items to allow board members the respect of time to consider proposals. All board members were aware by June 1 that the administration intended to propose the resolution that was on the board's agenda for June 13th. The draft resolution was provided in writing to board members on June 8th. Then, just two hours before the start of our meeting on the 13th, Dr. Satiani e-mailed an alternative resolution to the superintendent, which was contrary to our newly-established norms and did not allow fellow board members any time to consider it. While I'm sure she would have preferred to send it sooner, it was disappointing that it happened that way. The outcome was that the board passed the proposed resolution that was on the agenda and what this does is simply press pause on filing new litigation to give the new administration some time to consider this, along with many other district priorities, in partnership with the board. I expect these conversations to pick up again soon.

Thanks again for emailing with your concerns.

Sincerely, Lori [Quoted text hidden]

Lori Trent (she/her) President, Upper Arlington Board of Education 614-214-0112 Cell



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Ukeme Awakessien Jeter <uawakessien-jeter@uach.net> To: Lori Trent ltrent@uaschools.org

Sun, Jun 25, 2023 at 11:38 PM

Hi. Lori -

Thank you for your response. Apologies, I am just getting back into town. While I appreciate the context, I remain concerned that our community members that were in attendance are not privy to that neither do they understand procedural nuance. What they saw was multiple interruptions and their concern about civility towards Dr. Satiani are valid.

With the holidays and my travels, it may be easier to just hop on the phone to discuss. I have some availability tomorrow at 3p and Tuesday at noon, I will shoot you a text to find us time

Thanks, Ukeme

UKEME AWAKESSIEN JETER

Councilmember | Upper Arlington City Council e:uajeter@uaoh.net | c:614-285-7258



From: Lori Trent ltrent@uaschools.org Sent: Friday, June 23, 2023 9:56 AM



June 13 BOE meeting

Kathy Adams <kadams@uaoh.net>
To: "Ndrees@uaschools.org" <Ndrees@uaschools.org>

Sat, Jun 17, 2023 at 11:01 AM

Dear Board Member Drees:

I am writing in regards to the June 13 BOE meeting. I have heard from numerous residents who were surprised and dismayed by the disrespectful treatment of Board Member Satiani. I watched the video of the meeting, and I was similarly disheartened by the lack of civility in how she was treated.

City staff and city council have spent a great deal of time and effort in building trust with our residents, as demonstrated by a recent community survey. The schools, an important part of our community that is also funded by tax dollars, must also work to maintain public trust. The behavior that was exhibited towards a duly elected member of the Board is harmful to the entire community.

I urge you to issue a public apology to Board Member Satiani, if this has not already occurred, and to take steps to ensure that future Board meetings are not conducted this way. I would be happy to discuss this email, and our interactions on city council, if you would like to set up a time to meet.

Thank you.

[Quoted text hidden]

To: Ukeme Awakessien Jeter <uawakessien-jeter@uaoh.net> Subject: Re: Civility Needs to be Restored

[Quoted text hidden]



June 13 BOE meeting

Kathy Adams <kadams@uaoh.net>
To: "isauter@uaschools.org" <isauter@uaschools.org>

Sat, Jun 17, 2023 at 10:59 AM

Dear Board Member Sauter:

I am writing in regards to the June 13 BOE meeting. I have heard from numerous residents who were surprised and dismayed by the disrespectful treatment of Board Member Satiani. I watched the video of the meeting, and I was similarly disheartened by the lack of civility in how she was treated.

City staff and city council have spent a great deal of time and effort in building trust with our residents, as demonstrated by a recent community survey. The schools, an important part of our community that is also funded by tax dollars, must also work to maintain public trust. The behavior that was exhibited towards a duly elected member of the Board is harmful to the entire community.

I urge you to issue a public apology to Board Member Satiani, if this has not already occurred, and to take steps to ensure that future Board meetings are not conducted this way. I would be happy to discuss this email, and our interactions on city council, if you would like to set up a time to meet.

Thank you.

[Quoted text hidden]



June 13 BOE meeting

Lori Trent ltrent@uaschools.org To: Kathy Adams <kadams@uaoh.net> Fri, Jun 23, 2023 at 9:58 AM

Dear Kathy.

I appreciate you reaching out and I do wish to discuss those with you. Can you share some times that you would be available, please?

I understand that you watched our June 13th board meeting video and had concerns with the board dynamics you saw. As the board's parliamentarian, I am required on occasion to interrupt for procedural reasons and there were occasions at this meeting where board members spoke out of turn and I had to call points of order. This happened with Dr. Satiani and Mr. Sauter. I am sure you can appreciate that there were other issues involved that could provide some context.

We recently worked together as a board to develop norms for our meetings, one of which included that we would provide at least 24 hours' notice for new items to allow board members the respect of time to consider proposals. All board members were aware by June 1 that the administration intended to propose the resolution that was on the board's agenda for June 13th. The draft resolution was provided in writing to board members on June 8th. Then, just two hours before the start of our meeting on the 13th, Dr. Satiani e-mailed an alternative resolution to the superintendent, which was contrary to our newly-established norms and did not allow fellow board members any time to consider it. While I'm sure she would have preferred to send it sconer, it was disappointing that it happened that way and it did result in some frustration.

Thanks again for emailing with your concerns and I hope to chat with you soon.

Sincerely,

Lori

On Sat, Jun 17, 2023 at 10:57 AM Kathy Adams < kadams@uaoh.net> wrote:

Dear Board President Trent:

I am writing in regards to the June 13 BOE meeting. I have heard from numerous residents who were surprised and dismayed by the disrespectful treatment of Board Member Satiani. I watched the video of the meeting, and I was similarly disheartened by the lack of civility in how she was treated.

City staff and city council have spent a great deal of time and effort in building trust with our residents, as demonstrated by a recent community survey. The schools, an important part of our community that is also funded by tax dollars, must also work to maintain public trust. The behavior that was exhibited towards a duly elected member of the Board is harmful to the entire community.

I urge you to issue a public apology to Board Member Satiani, if this has not already occurred, and to take steps to ensure that future Board meetings are not conducted this way. I would be happy to discuss this email, and our interactions on city council, if you would like to set up a time to meet.

Thank you.

KATHY ADAMS | she, her, hers Member | Upper Arlington City Council The City of Upper Arlington 3600 Tremont Road, Upper Arlington, OH 43221 c: 614-558-1820 e: kadams@uaoh.net | upperarlingtonoh.gov

Lori Trent (she/her) President, Upper Arlington Board of Education 614-214-0112 Cell





June 13 BOE meeting

Jenny McKenna < jcmckenna@uaschools.org> To: Kathy Adams <kadams@uaoh.net>

Sat, Jun 17, 2023 at 11:34 AM

Hev Kathv.

I would be happy to chat. I am currently on my way to Colorado and will not be home until next weekend. Do you have time the week of June 26th. Thanks.

Jenny

On Sat, Jun 17, 2023 at 11:04 AM Kathy Adams <kadams@uaoh.net> wrote: Dear Board Member McKenna:

I am writing in regards to the June 13 BOE meeting. I have heard from numerous residents who were surprised and dismayed by the disrespectful treatment of Board Member Satiani. I watched the video of the meeting, and I was similarly disheartened by the lack of civility in how she was treated.

City staff and city council have spent a great deal of time and effort in building trust with our residents, as demonstrated by a recent community survey. The schools, an important part of our community that is also funded by tax dollars, must also work to maintain public trust. The behavior that was exhibited towards a duly elected member of the Board is harmful to the entire community.

I urge you to issue a public apology to Board Member Satiani, if this has not already occurred, and to take steps to ensure that future Board meetings are not conducted this way. I would be happy to discuss this email, and our interactions on city council, if you would like to set up a time to meet.

Thank you.

KATHY ADAMS | she, her, hers Member | Upper Arlington City Council The City of Upper Arlington 3600 Tremont Road, Upper Arlington, OH 43221 c: 614-558-1820

e: kadams@uaoh.net | upperarlingtonoh.gov

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