

Rick Maxey, Superintendent Horry County Schools
Regarding Termination letter dated August 28, 2017

Dear Dr. Maxey,

This is in response to your letter dated August 28, 2017, in which you determined that I would no longer be allowed to coach the Conway High School Varsity Football team. I have determined that despite the inaccurate statements in your letter and your errors in judgment, I will not pursue any avenue that may be available to me to undo your decision-making in this regard. However, it seems to me necessary that I point out erroneous points made in your letter that are disparaging to my name and reputation.

According to your letter, your decision appears to be based upon two findings. First, that I made errors in judgment regarding how I chose to handle this matter. Secondly, that my touching of the student was both unreasonable and unnecessary.

To support your finding that I made errors in judgement, you stated in our meeting that I should have left the unruly student in the hallways and gone back to my office. In your letter you insinuate that the student was not threatening other students and even if he was, I should have discontinued following him and gone to get a resource officer.

I'd like to address each of these points in the order that they occurred. A small female student did in fact come to my office, visibly shaken and told me that a student was making threatening comments and that assistance was needed. It was true when it happened and true when I told you that. I felt like it was important, based on the profanity and the threatening language, that a student of this size, addressing young women, be monitored carefully due to a potentially harmful and dangerous activity. Did you even look at the video to identify the young African-American female student who reported the bullying and talk to her about the threats being made by Mr. Hickman?

I did leave my office in a hurry, without my radio, because the young lady was visibly distraught, but as you know, and failed to mention, I, on numerous occasions, sought help from others while I was trying to monitor the student, as he walked away from me, still making threatening statements and using profanity to both me and students in close proximity.

As you know, and as you admitted to me, I did not know that Mr. Hickman was a special needs student, and you told me that would never be used against me in connection with this matter. From my perspective, he was a very large and physically imposing student, out of control and threatening other students and myself. I have asked what policy I violated when I followed this student to make sure he did not harm anyone. As of today, I have received no response.

You mention that I should have requested the help of the school resource officers as I passed their office. From the direction I was walking, I could not see anyone in the SRO

office. I was afraid that the student would get away from me and possibly cause harm to others in the school. That's why I stayed in close proximity to the student.

You failed to mention that as I passed the basketball coach, I asked him to get others to assist the situation. Although he was in close proximity and had a clear view of those in the SRO office, he chose to go to the front office to get the administration, yet you admonished me for not alerting the SRO who I never saw when he had clear view of them.

I followed a student that I felt was a danger to other kids through the school, keeping my hands to myself, even after he turned on me in the mini gym and again in the main gym. I continually asked other teachers to get me help from administration while I followed him. Like a Monday morning quarterback, you call that an error in judgment. I call it responsible. If I had gone back to my office as you suggested and he injured another student while in an un-medicated rage, how would you have characterized my conduct?

As to touching Mr. Hickman, it is undisputed that I never touched him until after Mr. McCants grabbed him and tried to remove him from the hallway. When Mr. Hickman turned on me and got chest to chest for the third time, threatening me, I motioned for assistance from others and it is clear to me that when Mr. McCants heard the language that was being used and observed the demeanor of the student, he rushed toward him on a run and in grabbing him from behind, inadvertently pushed him towards me. The surveillance camera, which was spotty at best, misses that interaction between the three of us, but it is what probably resulted in my hand going forward to get him off me. As he was in the process of being held back and removed from the hallway by Mr. McCants, I was simply trying to keep the student from hurting me, Mr. McCants, or any of the students walking in the hallway. You claim I touched him "after" he was restrained by Mr. McCants. That is incorrect. I was assisting Mr. McCants in restraining him.

I never gripped his neck at any time. This is clear, concretely established by Mr. Hickman's statement to the police. I have attached a copy of this statement and would assume you have read it. He did not accuse me of choking him or hurting him. Mr. McCants said he never saw me touch him. Some with an agenda freeze the video to show my hand near Mr. Hickman's neck for a fraction of a second and call it "choking". I never choked Mr. Hickman. This is obvious from the video. All of those who have seen it in its entirety agree, including, experienced prosecutors, who review surveillance tapes as evidence on a regular basis. My anger was at the language and threats that this young man was making. It did not affect my actions in any way, except to be sure that I was in close proximity to him until the matter could be dealt with by others and myself, in a way that was not harmful to Mr. Hickman and protected other students and teachers.

The district's policy allows the touching of unruly students in self-defense and to protect other teachers and students. If in fact I touched him, that's exactly what I did when I used my hands to move both he and Mr. McCants from a hallway full of students. A fact finder with no agenda, like the solicitor's office and the city attorney, after weighing all the

evidence, would find that I did not violate the district's policy and acted appropriately to protect myself, Mr. McCants, Mr. Hickman and the students at CHS.

I refuse to accept the allegations and misstatements and erroneous conclusions set forth in your letter of August 28th as I leave my coaching career. I did my job in this situation with strong resolve and followed the situation until it was administratively contained. I did what was expected of me and would do it again given the same set of circumstances.

Quite frankly, it's clear to me now that when you called me into your office for a meeting with you and two others and without my attorney, that you and others had already orchestrated your plan of action. Then you chose to pick bits and pieces out of context, fully misrepresenting what took place at CHS. Your decision was made in concert with others for reasons satisfactory to your agenda. You were the messenger but not the only author.

The district waited months during the criminal process claiming to need to see the outcome of the criminal case. If you now ignore that outcome, why did you wait? Why didn't you make this decision a week after the incident?

In closing, you do no justice to me and the career I've had by setting forth such erroneous facts and judgments. You do no justice to the teachers and staff going forward as they now are forced to question your motives to protect them or to advance your own career.

Your insensitivity to the threatening circumstance that was present and the duty and responsibility of a teacher to protect others in the school from threat and violence is quite shocking. You do a great disservice to others who will be in a situation like I found myself. I hope you will find, going forward, that the teachers who respond to the request of a student to protect them or see to a matter of this nature, will be fully protected, especially when they do no harm or cause no injury to the offending student. This is important for all of our students and faculty members in every school in Horry County.

As I stated at the beginning of this letter, I have told my attorney I'm not going to pursue this matter any further, but I want this response to stand as a complete denial, fully refuting your "findings and conclusions". Any further action on my part would be a distraction to my players and coaches. It's always been about helping boys turn into men, spiritually, physically and socially. The young men on this year's team are exceptional and have worked very hard to make this a season to remember. I refuse to be a distraction to those kids and coaches as they pursue a state title.

I will never again walk the sideline for the Conway Tigers and that breaks my heart. Every coach wants to go out on his terms and I certainly am not doing that. However, I do understand that I was fired, not on the merits of the incident in the hallway at CHS, and not based on the content of my character, but based on your views and fear of the prevalent social environment.

Yours Truly,

Chuck Jordan