



July 7, 2021

Inga Dainius

VIA EMAIL – inga.dainius@hotmail.com

Re: FOIA request dated 6/15/21 & received 6/16/21

Dear Mrs. Dainius,

Subject: Provide any and all documents and communication regarding Plank Jr. High removing God Bless the USA from electronic marquee dates between 7/1/19 and 9/30/19.

This letter will serve as Oswego Community Unit School District 308's response to your FOIA narrowed search revision on June 29, 2021 under the Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140/1 et seq.), in which you asked for the above referenced information. The information regarding your request is attached. Redactions were made due to the following exemption under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act as follows:

Section 7(1)(c) - Personal information contained within public records, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, unless the disclosure is consented to in writing by the individual subjects of the information.

The decision to withhold the redacted information was made by me consulting with our District legal counsel. You have a right to have the denial of your request reviewed by the Public Access Counselor (PAC) at the Office of the Illinois Attorney General. 5 ILCS 140/9.5(a). You can file your Request for Review with the PAC by writing to:

Public Access Counselor
Office of the Attorney General
500 South 2nd Street
Springfield, IL 62706

If you choose to file a Request for Review with the PAC, you must do so within 60 calendar days of the date of this denial letter. Please note that you must include a copy of your original FOIA request and this denial letter when filing a Request for Review with the PAC. You also have the right to seek judicial review of your denial by filing a lawsuit in the State circuit court. 5 ILCS 140/11.

To promote district transparency and assist others who may have a similar question, this responsive document will be posted online on the district's website. To access it, go to www.sd308.org and select *Our District > Freedom of Information Act Request > FOIA Request Responses > FOIA Requests Responses -2021 > then select FOIA ID #21-35*.

Please be advised that to comply with your FOIA request, the district incurred an expense that comprised of the cost

of labor and resources used to search for records responsive to your request. Let me know if you have additional questions. Thank you.

Carrie Szambelan

Carrie Szambelan
Freedom of Information Officer



Fwd: Front sign Controversy

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Tyler Haymond** <thaymond@sd308.org>
Date: Wed, Aug 14, 2019 at 12:29 PM
Subject: Re: Front sign Controversy
To: Theresa Komitas <tkomitas@sd308.org>

It was from July 4th, we have it down.

On Wed, Aug 14, 2019 at 12:11 PM Theresa Komitas <tkomitas@sd308.org> wrote:

I know you're getting calls about this, it's blowing up on social media. Can you please let me know if there is any specific reason behind God Bless the USA being on the sign? And if not, can you please try to remove asap and let me know when it's done? Thanks.

--

Theresa Komitas

Director of Communications and Public Relations

Community Unit School District 308
District Administration Center

4175 Rt 71
Oswego, IL 60543

630-636-3660
630-383-9287
tkomitas@sd308.org

www.SD308.org

Mission Statement: In partnership with our families and communities, Community Unit School District 308 will educate all students to reach their highest potential.

--

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Haymond".

Tyler Haymond
Principal
Plank Jr. High School
Phone: 630-551-9410
Fax: 630-551-9691



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--

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Principal
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Phone: 630-551-9410
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Fwd: Front sign Controversy

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Theresa Komitas** <tkomitas@sd308.org>

Date: Wed, Aug 14, 2019 at 12:11 PM

Subject: Front sign Controversy

To: Tyler Haymond <thaymond@sd308.org>, Marcus Lewis <mlewis01@sd308.org>, Bailey Campbell <bcampbell@sd308.org>

I know you're getting calls about this, it's blowing up on social media. Can you please let me know if there is any specific reason behind God Bless the USA being on the sign? And if not, can you please try to remove asap and let me know when it's done? Thanks.

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Theresa Komitas
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plank.JPG
70K



Robyn Vickers added 2 new photos.

1 hr · 

Sign outside Alex's school. Presented without comment.

ETA: I actually have a lot to say about this, but want to hear from others first.
What do you think?



  12

43 Comments

SUBJECT: Social Media RE: Plank
FROM: Theresa Komitas <tkomitas@sd308.org>
TO: John Sparlin <jsparlin@sd308.org>
DATE: 15/08/2019 14:28
ATTACHMENTS (20190815-142857-0000000): "[WSPY.JPG](#)" , "[Only Oswego.JPG](#)"

The Plank God Bless America Story went live just under an hour ago, it was also placed on Only Oswego. There are 229 comments on Only Oswego and 137 on WSPY already! Both sides mad at this...Robyn Vickers is on air commenting about it.

--

Theresa Komitas
Director of Communications and Public Relations

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SUBJECT: Re: Plank Jr. High Sign
FROM: Theresa Komitas <tkomitas@sd308.org>
TO: WSPY NEWS <wspynews@gmail.com>
DATE: 15/08/2019 11:36

Good Morning Tyler,

The electronic marquee at Plank Junior High did contain a statement of *God Bless the USA*, which was added in early July, in celebration of Independence Day. The rotating electronic sign contained many other messages about upcoming events and welcoming students back to school.

The message was intended to be patriotic when it was added before the July 4th holiday. When concerns were received on Aug. 14, the wording was removed from the sign's rotation. The marquee messages are generated by the individual buildings, we do not believe the same wording appeared on other school marquees.

Thank you
Theresa

On Thu, Aug 15, 2019 at 7:49 AM WSPY NEWS <wspynews@gmail.com> wrote:
Good morning Theresa,

I'm seeking a district statement.

I am working on a story regarding an electronic message that was posted to the sign outside of Plank Jr. High. that read, "God Bless the USA." From what has been stated to me, there were some parents upset or that disagreed that the school should be displaying the message out of concern of not including all students/families religious beliefs. I have been told that the message was taken down.

My questions would be was the message taken down because of the concern from parents who called or reached out?

Also, was this same message posted electronically (or I suppose in any other form) at other district schools. If so, was there any action taken there?

Thanks!

Tyler Bachman
WSPY

--
Theresa Komitas
Director of Communications and Public Relations

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SUBJECT: Re: Plank Jr. High Sign
FROM: WSPY NEWS <wspynews@gmail.com>
TO: Theresa Komitas <tkomitas@sd308.org>
DATE: 15/08/2019 11:37

Thanks Theresa!

Tyler

On Thu, Aug 15, 2019 at 11:36 AM Theresa Komitas <tkomitas@sd308.org> wrote:

Good Morning Tyler,

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Thanks!

Tyler Bachman
WSPY

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SUBJECT: Google Alert - oswego school
 FROM: Google Alerts <googlealerts-noreply@google.com>
 TO: tkomitas@sd308.org
 DATE: 15/08/2019 16:04

Google Alerts

oswego school

Daily update · August 15, 2019

NEWS

[Lake Oswego Lakers prepare for 2019 high school football season: Photos](#)

OregonLive.com

The Oregonian/OregonLive's annual high **school** football tour continued Tuesday with a stop at Lake **Oswego High School**, where the Lakers were ...



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['God Bless the USA' message removed from Oswego school sign](#)

Kendall County Now

Oswego School District 308 officials have confirmed that a "God Bless the USA" message posted on an electronic marquee sign in front of Plank ...



Flag as irrelevant

[SUNY Oswego Again Among Princeton Review's 'Best Regional Colleges'](#)

Oswego Daily News

OSWEGO — The Princeton Review once again has named SUNY **Oswego** to its list of the 224 Best Regional **Colleges-Northeast**, a distinction the ...



Flag as irrelevant

Five Towns students enter SUNY Oswego, make the Union College dean's list

liherald

Among the more than 1,500 students that will be first-year students at SUNY Oswego is Cedarhurst resident Briana Kur, a Lawrence High School ...



Flag as irrelevant

Former Portland school volunteer caught up in online sting, accused of luring minor

OregonLive.com

A Lake Oswego man who volunteered at Portland schools and helped lead a boy's church choir in Lake Oswego in the 1990s was arrested in an FBI ...

Police: 61-year-old Lake Oswego man with 'extensive contact with minors' arrested for luring ... - KPTV.com

Former high school volunteer arrested for luring a minor, police worried of other victims - KVAL

Lake Oswego man arrested for luring minor, sexual corruption of child - KGW.com

Full Coverage



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Plank Jr. High in Oswego Removes 'God Bless the USA' Message From Electronic Marquee After ...

WspyNews (press release)

As students in Oswego SD308 returned to school on Wednesday, an elementary school in the district heard concerns from some who felt a message ...



Flag as irrelevant

School cell phone policy should be re-examined

Pamplin Media Group

The current Lake Oswego School District zero tolerance policy on student cell phone use is short-sighted, in my opinion. Teachers, administrators and ...



Flag as irrelevant

Aurora man back in court next month for Oswego coach's hit-and-run death

Kendall County Now

YORKVILLE – An Aurora man charged in connection with the hit-and-run death of an Oswego High School softball coach will be back in court in next ...

Man Accused in Hit and Run Death of Oswego Softball Coach to Have Trial Set Next Month - WspyNews

(press release)

Full Coverage



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Ceremony held for Elite Games Top 100 Baseball showcase

oswegocountynewsnow.com

Scott Landers, head coach of the Oswego State baseball team; and Steve ... After starring for his high school team, he moved on to play for Gannon ...



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Fulton, NY: A History, Podcast Episode 2

Oswego Daily News

I grew up in the Town of Granby and went to **school** in Fulton, and started out at **Oswego** State, met my wife and we decided to stay here in Fulton, New ...



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SUBJECT: Re: Request for Information, The Beacon-News, Aug. 15

FROM: Theresa Komitas <tkomitas@sd308.org>

TO: [REDACTED]

DATE: 15/08/2019 22:35

The electronic marquee at Plank Junior High did contain a statement of *God Bless the USA*, which was added in early July, in celebration of Independence Day. The rotating electronic sign contained many other messages about upcoming events and welcoming students back to school.

The message was intended to be patriotic when it was added before the July 4th holiday.

When concerns were received on Aug. 14, the wording was removed from the sign's rotation. The marquee messages are generated by the individual buildings, we do not believe the same wording appeared on other school marquees.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 15, 2019, at 7:09 PM, [REDACTED] wrote:

Good evening Theresa,

Can you please provide information about the Plank School signage, God Bless the USA and how was the district notified of it?

Thank you,

Linda Girardi

For The Beacon-News

SUBJECT: Re: Marquee

FROM: Theresa Komitas <tkomitas@sd308.org>

TO: [REDACTED] >

DATE: 15/08/2019 22:38

The electronic marquee at Plank Junior High did contain a statement of *God Bless the USA*, which was added in early July, in celebration of Independence Day. The rotating electronic sign contained many other messages about upcoming events and welcoming students back to school.

The message was intended to be patriotic when it was added before the July 4th holiday, and was intended to be rotated out following the holiday.

When questions were received on Aug. 14, the wording was removed from the sign's rotation. The marquee messages are generated by the individual buildings. Any additional questions regarding the messages on school marquees can be directed to the individual school.

Sent from my iPhone

On Aug 15, 2019, at 8:38 PM, [REDACTED] > wrote:

I want to know who's decision this was?

http://www.wspynews.com/news/local/plank-jr-high-in-oswego-removes-god-bless-the-usa/article_447b5af0-bf86-11e9-b28d-1b550066c984.html

Not inclusive to who? This is indeed the USA right?

Sincerely one pissed off parent

SUBJECT: Google Alert - oswego school district
FROM: Google Alerts <googlealerts-noreply@google.com>
TO: tkomitas@sd308.org
DATE: 16/08/2019 16:01

Google Alerts

oswego school district

Daily update · August 16, 2019

NEWS

'God Bless the USA' message removed from Oswego school sign

Kendall County Now

Oswego School District 308 officials have confirmed that a "God Bless the USA" message posted on an electronic marquee sign in front of Plank ...

[Plank Jr. High in Oswego Removes 'God Bless the USA' Message From Electronic Marquee After ...](#) -

WspyNews (press release)

[Full Coverage](#)



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Back 2 School: Finding the right coach to keep your kids safe

KATU

LAKE OSWEGO, Ore. — In Lake **Oswego School District**, students aren't necessarily sent home on suspension when they break school rules, fight ...



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SUBJECT: Google Alert - SD308

FROM: Google Alerts <googlealerts-noreply@google.com>

TO: tkomitas@sd308.org

DATE: 16/08/2019 16:01

Google Alerts

SD308

Daily update · August 16, 2019

NEWS

[Plank Jr. High in Oswego Removes 'God Bless the USA' Message From Electronic Marquee After ...](#)

WspyNews (press release)

As students in Oswego **SD308** returned to school on Wednesday, an elementary school in the district heard concerns from some who felt a message ...



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