

# Daily Herald

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## Teachers union wants cameras out

By Chad Brooks

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Angry that a hidden video surveillance camera was used to fire a Palatine Township Elementary District 15 employee, the teachers union wants the practice stopped.

Lisa Nuss, executive director of the District 15 teachers union, said Tuesday that the union is taking all necessary, appropriate and available legal action to get the district to stop using hidden surveillance cameras.

District 15 terminated an employee of Willow Bend Elementary in Rolling Meadows based on information obtained using a hidden camera located in the school's teachers lounge, Nuss said.

School officials did not identify the fired employee or say what his or her job was. Nuss confirmed it was not a teacher.

While confirming the use of the camera, Superintendent Robert McKanna said he could not provide any details of what the district found on the tape that caused the firing or anything about the terminated employee.

Nuss said the union was also not aware of what the employee was found doing on the camera.

In a written statement, McKanna said the cameras were installed at Willow Bend for a short period this year as part of ongoing probe of a personnel matter at Willow Bend.

"The decision to use video surveillance is not one we make lightly, but have found it to be occasionally necessary when we have had concern about inappropriate actions occurring on school grounds," McKanna wrote.

He would not provide specifics on why the camera was installed or if the person who was terminated was the employee being investigated.

Officials with the Rolling Meadows police said they are not investigating any matters regarding current or former school employees.

Nuss said the firing occurred on June 6 and that, two days later, the union sent a letter to the district demanding the cameras be removed.

The union has filed an unfair labor practice complaint with the Illinois Labor Relations Board.

"We believe that their actions are in violation of at least the Labor Relations Act," Nuss said, adding the union plans to contact the Cook County state's attorney's office this week to see what legal action could be taken.

Officials with the state's attorney's office had no comment on the situation Tuesday.

Nuss said the union also asked that past uses of the hidden camera be disclosed and that all past recording be made available for the union's review.

Last week, the district responded to the union, confirming the use of hidden cameras. But Nuss said there was no disclosure of when cameras were used in the past, and there was no agreement to stop the practice.

Less than a year after the union and district were at odds over a new contract that put the teachers on the verge of a strike, Nuss said this is not the best way to try and repair that relationship.

"This would not be a step in the right direction," Nuss said.

Since Willow Bend is the school where teachers union President Jan Belzer works, Nuss said there are confidential union meetings held in the teachers lounge there.

"There are a variety of activities going on in there," Nuss said, "one of which being confidential union meetings."

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