

Motions for Discovery Filed Against The Pingry School for the Sexual Abuse of a Former Fifth Grade Student

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A motion to compel discovery was filed in the Superior Court of New Jersey—Essex County against The Pingry School by the law firm of Pashman Stein Walder Hayden (PSWH) on behalf of a former Pingry student who was sexually abused by a teacher at Pingry in the 1970s. The initial complaint, filed in March of this year, alleges that Pingry was aware of the sexual abuse by Thad Alton and fraudulently concealed it from the public and in particular the parents of Pingry students. A Letter Brief in support of Plaintiffs' Motion and the Certification of Dennis T. Smith, with Exhibits, are available for review.

Justin P. Walder, Co-Chair of PSWH's Litigation Department, is representing the Plaintiff, whose father is also a named Plaintiff.

The motion specifically requests that the Court compel defendant The Pingry School to respond to Plaintiffs' discovery requests and to produce witness summaries, sworn witness statements, and/or transcripts of depositions that have been taken of victims who alleged sexual abuse by Thad Alton.

By way of background, in the spring of 2016, Pingry notified its alumni that it was going to investigate allegations of sexual abuse in the 1970s by its former teacher and lower school assistant principal Thad Alton. Pingry authorized T&M Protection Resources, to investigate the claims. In March 2017, T&M released a report which confirmed the sexual abuse of at least 27 students.

The complaint filed in March alleges that Pingry knew or should have known about the rampant sexual abuse and failed to intervene and protect its students. Alton was publicly charged by the Essex County Prosecutor's Office in 1979 and criminally convicted of multiple "acts of lewdness," involving twelve-year-old Pingry students. Yet, Pingry failed to take any corrective action or notify parents so that they could

ensure that their children were safe and were provided any necessary professional care.

In the filed motion to compel discovery, Plaintiffs are requesting that Pingry comply with demands for documents and interrogatories that were requested many months ago. “These documents, including witness statements and deposition transcripts,” explains Justin Walder, “will shed light on what Pingry new about Thad Alton’s sexual abuse of students and when Pingry knew or should have known it.

Of particular significance is Exhibit F within the Certification of Dennis T. Smith, which shows a September 18, 2003 email from a former Pingry student alerting Pingry of Thad Alton's sexual abuse of others. This evidence contradicts the March 28, 2016 letter to the Pingry Community, in which Pingry contends that it had only “recently learned” that its students were sexually abused by Thad Alton.

“Pingry has sought to present itself as being committed to ‘providing an environment that promotes safety, candor, and transparency’ but in reality Pingry has refused to provide statements of victims and sworn testimony of Thad Alton's sexual abuse of young students. Pingry has not been transparent. Pingry is attempting to cover up the true facts and evade its duty and responsibility to a former Pingry student and his family.” said Walder. For more information, please contact:

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