

Official subpoenas union files

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YONKERS — An investigation into how the Yonkers Federation of Teachers spends taxpayer money has led to a subpoena, a denial and a possible lawsuit.

Yonkers Inspector General Dan Schorr sent a subpoena to the Yonkers Federation of Teachers on Oct. 25 seeking information on how the union's Welfare Fund administers about \$4 million that it annually receives from the Yonkers Board of Education. Schorr set a deadline of Monday for a response, but instead received a letter this week from the union's attorney indicating that the union will not give him the information.

Schorr said his office had made previous document requests to the union without receiving specifics on the funds' expenses.

"It's an important amount of money," Schorr said, noting that the district closed 90 teaching positions in June during its budget crisis. "There needs to be open books in the city of Yonkers that are scrutinized by an independent watchdog for taxpayers."

Schorr said the Welfare Fund is managed by the union and it is supposed to cover certain teacher benefits such as dental or legal costs.

He said he foresees having to resort to the state Supreme Court to try to force the union to release its expenses.

Union President Pat Puleo said that she has nothing to do hide and that the union has cooperated with Schorr.

"We keep working with him and he keeps upping the ante, making it less easy to work with him," Puleo said.

The true state of the Yonkers Public Schools finances is important to taxpayers because district officials are already predicting a \$46.6 million deficit for the 2011-12 school year.

Puleo said that if Schorr wants detailed information about Welfare Fund expenses, he should ask Board of Education President Paresh Patel, who is also president of the Welfare Fund's board of trustees. Schorr said he asked Patel for such information, but was told Patel didn't have it.

The subpoena is the latest tug of war between the school system and the Inspector General's Office. Last year the Board of Education asked the state Supreme Court to rule on the inspector general's authority to review its finances. The court said Schorr had proper authority.