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Complaint filed against Fayetteville schools

NWA DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

FAYETTEVILLE — A Fort Smith attorney is suing the Fayetteville School District, alleging the district has refused to turn over documents he's requested.

Joey McCutchen said he and Chip Sexton filed the lawsuit in Washington County Circuit Court on Friday on behalf of Ila Campbell of Fayetteville, according to a news release McCutchen sent Friday.

"The Complaint, brought under the Freedom of Information Act, arises following two separate FOIA requests submitted to the Fayetteville Public School District requesting, in part, the District's equity plan, documen-

tation regarding Critical Race Theory, LGBTQ policies and gender support plans, use of the word 'Christmas,' and the Converge Social Justice Consulting Firm," McCutchen's release states.

The lawsuit was filed after the district "refused to respond to six clearly identified items," the release states.

The original FOIA request was filed May 17, according to the lawsuit. The request was for all email, internal memos, notes, or other communications to and from district employees and School Board members that discuss the requested documents.

The request also sought all emails to or from any district employees or board member

and any member of the Fayetteville City Council or the Fayetteville mayor's office.

It also sought all documents, memos, emails or other written communications that were generated or created by, sent to or otherwise mention the University of Arkansas' IDEALS Institute and all contracts, agreements or memoranda of understanding between the district and the Converge Social Justice Consulting Firm.

The request also sought all contracts, agreements or memoranda of understanding between the district and TRUE NW Arkansas Train, which the lawsuit says was developed by the Walton Family Foundation, Walmart and the Arkansas

Community Foundation.

According to McCutchen's release, the district replied that the FOIA request was not sufficiently specific to enable the records custodian to locate the records with reasonable effort and that his request should be narrowed to include only the district leadership team.

An email sent to district spokesman Alan Wilbourn late Friday afternoon seeking comment on the matter had not been returned Friday evening.

The case is assigned to Circuit Judge John Threet. McCutchen and Sexton have requested a hearing be held within seven days, per the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act.