# NEWS

*"There's a fire within my soul / Just one look and I can hear a bell ring."*
**MAMMA MIA** ABBA

## Police oversight board member denies harassment allegations

BY EVELYN RONAN AND IDA NJIE
STAFF REPORTER AND CONTRIBUTING REPORTER



EVELYN RONAN / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
At a Monday night Civilian Review Board meeting, board member Germano Kimbro described a series of sexual harassment claims that another member raised against him. He said they were part of a "conspiracy" to remove him from the board.

At a Monday night meeting of the Civilian Review Board, New Haven's police oversight body, board member Germano Kimbro discredited allegations that he sexually harassed a female member of the body, which is tasked with reviewing civilian complaints against the New Haven Police Department.

In a winding speech, Kimbro described a series of allegations that the member made against him, including "inappropriate touching" and an incident during which he asked the member to rub suntan lotion on him. The member, who confirmed to the News that she filed a complaint of sexual harassment with the city's corporation counsel, requested anonymity due to concerns about safety.

"The city takes any allegation of sexual harassment very seriously," Lenny Speiller, a city hall spokesperson, wrote in an email to the News. "The allegations of sexual harassment by a CRB board member were referred by the Office of Corporation Counsel to an independent outside investigator, and the results of the investigation were shared with the appointing authority."

At the Monday meeting, Kimbro described the allegations as "unfair" and said they impaired his ability to serve on the board. Kimbro denied the allegations in a text message.

"These things are egregious, and anybody that's from this community knows that I have put in my life, blood, sweat, tears and body on the frontline to make New Haven a better place," Kimbro said about the allegations during the Monday meeting.

The board member who made the allegations was not present at the meeting during Kimbro's remarks. Kimbro invited friends and members of his family to testify as character witnesses about his general behavior at the meeting.

In a text message, Kimbro described the claims as a "conspiracy to have me removed from the board." At the meeting, he accused New Haven's corporation counsel, who is the city's chief legal advisor, of having "colluded" with the board member.

Speiller wrote that any allegation of collusion "is completely baseless" and wrote that "no CRB members have been removed to date from their positions."

In a phone interview, the board member who filed the harassment complaint denied any accusations of conspiring with the corporation counsel to remove Kimbro.

The accusations against Kimbro and his retaliation against the city's litigators come as the board faces several vacancies and inconsistent member attendance. At Monday's meeting, board members called into question the group's function and whether it was fulfilling its civic mission.

Board member and Fair Haven alder Frank Redente attributed the board's lack of direction to its many vacancies and an absence of diverse perspectives on policing.

"I would like to see this board have more people of color and more people who have actually had negative experiences with police," Redente said in a phone interview. "Until we fill this board, it won't have credibility."

According to a city website, the 15-member Civilian Review Board has nine vacancies and two members whose terms have expired.

Update, Sept. 30: This article has been updated to include the anonymous board member's comment on Kimbro's accusation of collusion.

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## Teachers, students denounce dilapidated facilities at public schools

BY CHANTAL EULENSTEIN, NELLIE KENNEY AND NAUSICAA CHU
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Students, teachers and administrators decried neglected conditions in New Haven schools in front of a crowd of over 60 people in City Hall Tuesday night.

Speakers called for increased school funding and transparency and slammed the city's Board of Education, which they said has not addressed dangerous conditions, including broken HVAC systems, poor air quality and mold. Alders at the meeting floated the possibility of shutting down schools while maintenance work was done. The city's schools have long faced a deferred maintenance crisis.

"We've reached a breaking point," Leslie Blatteau '97 GRD '07, the president of the New Haven Federation of Teachers, said in a speech to the board.

The school district's contract with ABM Industries, which has handled facility repairs since 2022, ended on Wednesday, and New Haven Public Schools is shifting to an in-house facilities management strategy. The school system's former facilities director left his position after two days last month, and the role is currently empty.

In August, members of the Board of Alders Education Committee issued a formal request for a city inspection of school buildings after alders identified facilities issues during a walk-through.

"We couldn't even breathe," Ward 7 Alder Angel Hubbard said, describing conditions in the four schools the alders toured.

In response to the alders' request, Mayor Justin Elicker and NHPS Superintendent Madeline Negrón released a joint statement saying that "all of our schools are safe for operation as we begin the school year." Elicker, in a separate statement, said the alders' "misleading and false message that our schools are not safe" was "disappointing."

Blatteau, who spoke on behalf of the teachers' union, alleged that the Board of Education has displayed a "continued pattern of neglect" towards teachers' complaints. As Blatteau spoke, audience members hoisted signs showing pictures of school buildings in disrepair.

"I think the biggest problem is, we'd never have all of the money and resources to address all of the problems as quickly as they arise," Daniel Juárez MUS '02, a member of the New Haven School Board, said in a statement to the News after the meeting. "These problems are not new. We've inherited them."

Since Aug. 26, Blatteau said, the union has filed 52 grievances — complaints that allege a breach of their union contract — against the Board of Education. Of those complaints, 16 have addressed HVAC issues, and the board has initiated responses to only 14 of the union's other complaints, Blatteau said.

Blatteau proposed a raft of solutions, including prioritizing city funds for capital improvement, establishing a designated safe temperature range for school buildings and providing compensation for teachers who replace damaged classroom supplies.

After Blatteau spoke, representatives from city agencies described the current process for identifying and addressing problems with school facilities.

"Nobody is arguing with the fact that there are significant issues that we have with our schools," New Haven's Chief Administrative Officer Justin McCarthy said. Supervisors are "doing our best to prioritize that," he said.

Hubbard expressed frustration with the officials' responses.

"I have not heard one clear answer yet from this panel," she said.

The alders also raised the possibility of shutting down schools. Hubbard asked the panel what it would take to temporarily close the schools for repairs, while Ward 10 Alder Anna Festa also suggested that due to inadequate conditions, "we might need to shut down schools."

In a speech to the committee, Negrón described the city's schools as underfunded and understaffed.

"We should be spending between $5.5 and $11.5 million more than what we currently spend on maintenance," she said.

Paul Whyte, the district's chief of school operations, said that administrators intend to submit a "master plan" for funding maintenance projects across the districts to alders by Dec. 31.

Alders called on Negrón and Whyte to provide the community with more transparency on the district's facilities and budget.

"Nothing that has been said tonight is disputed," Whyte told the committee.

Teachers, parents and students condemned the condition of the school buildings to the committee.

Karlee Ciarcia, a Truman School English teacher, described dealing with cockroaches, mice, ant infestations and ceiling leaks.

"After a rainstorm, you come in wondering whether this is the one that finally made it collapse," she said.

Ciarcia said she has found mold growing on supplies, along with rotting plywood and mushrooms growing in the corner of her classroom. In the fall and spring, she said, the temperature in her classrooms ranged anywhere between 80 to 90 degrees. Last spring, Ciarcia said, she sent at least one student to the nurse every day due to headaches, dizziness or lethargy.

Ciarcia said she has placed work orders for each of the problems in her classroom, but nothing was done.

"Those work orders feel like screaming into a void," she said.

Some students criticized the disconnect between the student body and administrators.

"I'm tired of students being told to accept conditions that adults would never accept in their own workplaces," Brandon Daley, a Metropolitan Business Academy student and lead liaison for the Citywide Student Council, told the alders. "This is not about politics. This is basic dignity we're asking for."

The meeting lasted nearly five hours.




DANIEL ZHAO
In a nearly-five-hour meeting, students and teachers slammed the conditions at New Haven Public Schools. The school district's contract with a facility repair company ended on Wednesday, and the district is set to take up in-house management.

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