OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS

KWAME RAOUL
ATTORNEY GENERAL

December 30, 2025

Via electronic mail
[redacted]

Via electronic mail
The Honorable Napoleon B. Harris III
Supervisor, Thornton Township
333 East 162nd Street
South Holland, Illinois 60473
c/o cnesbit@thorntontwp.com

RE: OMA Request for Review – 2025 PAC 90893

Dear [redacted] and Mr. Harris:

This determination is issued pursuant to section 3.5(b) of the Open Meetings Act (OMA) (5 ILCS 120/3.5(b) (West 2024)). For the reasons set forth below, the Public Access Bureau has determined that no further action is warranted in this matter.

On November 28, 2025, [redacted] submitted this Request for Review alleging that the Board of Trustees (Board) for Thornton Township (Township) violated sections 2.01 and 2.06(g) of OMA[1] in connection with its November 25, 2025, special meeting. [redacted] claimed that the Board failed to maintain order after this meeting concluded when an aggressive individual confronted him in the presence of the Board members. [redacted] alleged that Board failed to address this behavior and that "[a]llowing hostile individuals to confront, intimidate, or follow attendees creates a chilling effect on public participation[.]"[2]

[1]5 ILCS 120/2.01 (West 2024); *see also* 5 ILCS 120/2.06(g) (West 2024).

[2]E-mail from [redacted] to Public Access Counselor (November 28, 2025).

Additionally, [redacted] alleged the following:

> During the public comment portion of the meeting, a speaker, **Nina Graham** (President of School Board District 205, board member of Democrats of Thornton Township, and advisor to Thornton Township Supervisor Napoleon Harris), directly targeted me, pointed at me, and said:
>
> - "*When we step outside this door I got a question to ask you*."
> - Told me to "be quiet."
> - Made false accusations against me.
>
> This was not simply commentary—it was **targeted personal intimidation directed at a member of the public who was lawfully present.**[3] (Emphasis in original).

Section 3.5(a) of OMA[4] provides:

> A person who believes that a **violation of this Act by a public body** has occurred may file a request for review with the Public Access Counselor established in the Office of the Attorney General not later than 60 days after the alleged violation. * * * The request for review * * * must include a summary of **the facts supporting the allegation.** (Emphasis added.)

Access to Meetings

Under OMA, it is "the public policy of this State that its citizens shall be given advance notice of and the right to attend all meetings at which any business of a public body is discussed or acted upon in any way."[5] OMA provides that "[a]ll meetings required by this Act to be public shall be held at specified times and places which are convenient and open to the public."[6]

[3]E-mail from [redacted] to Public Access Counselor (November 28, 2025).

[4]5 ILCS 120/3.5(a) (West 2024).

[5]*See* 5 ILCS 120/1 (West 2024).

[6]5 ILCS 120/2.01 (West 2024).

[redacted] alleged that the Board's failure to address acts of aggression and intimidation deters those who wish to attend Board meetings. The recording that [redacted] provided shows that after the November 25, 2025, meeting had concluded, a man addressed him in the meeting room and made comments that [redacted] characterized as harassing, and that the man walked away as [redacted] objected to being harassed and a security guard approached. The recording also shows that a woman who identified herself as [redacted] friend later encouraged him to leave the parking lot to avoid a potential conflict with others, and a security guard appeared to agree. These encounters are not attributable to the Board and do not indicate that the Board promoted or tolerated threats or intimidation that prevented or dissuaded members of the public from attending the meeting. As noted above, a Request for Review of an alleged OMA violation must set forth facts that indicate that the public body potentially violated OMA. Because [redacted] did not provide facts to indicate that any member of the public was prevented or dissuaded from attending the November 25, 2025, meeting because of the Board's actions or inaction, this office has no basis to conclude that the Board violated OMA's requirement that meetings be open to the public.

Public Comment

Section 2.06(g) of OMA provides that "[a]ny person shall be permitted an opportunity to address public officials under the rules established and recorded by the public body." The intention of section 2.06(g) is to guarantee members of the public the right to address public bodies under the rules established by the public body. A public body violates section 2.06(g) of OMA when it: (1) prohibits a member of the public from addressing its members in a manner inconsistent with its established and recorded rules, or (2) prohibits a member of the public from providing public comment pursuant to its established and recorded rules, but those rules unreasonably restrict that person's right to address public officials. Ill. Att'y Gen. Pub. Acc. Op. No. 14-009, issued September 4, 2014, at 5-7. The Public Access Bureau has previously determined that to warrant further action by this office, a Request for Review concerning public comment must set forth facts indicating that a member of the public attempted to address public officials during an open meeting but was improperly restricted by the public body from doing so. *See, for example*, Ill. Att'y Gen. PAC Req. Rev. Ltr. 42017, issued June 1, 2016, at 1-2 (determining that a Request for Review alleging that a board's public comment rules violated section 2.06(g) of OMA did not warrant further inquiry because the Request for Review did not allege that anyone who attempted to address the board during an open meeting was improperly denied an opportunity to speak).

[redacted] alleged that during the meeting's public comment period, an individual, Ms. Graham, told him to be quiet and made false accusations against him. However, [redacted] has not alleged that he was improperly prevented from addressing the Board during the November 25, 2025, meeting. According to his submitted materials, [redacted] provided public comment about nine minutes into the meeting, just before Ms. Graham spoke. There is no indication that [redacted] public comments were improperly disrupted by any

Board members. The recording [redacted] provided shows that Ms. Graham criticized [redacted] during her public comment and he interjected to disagree, which led to comments that he characterized as intimidating. This conduct is not attributable to the Board, and there is no indication that the Board encouraged or acted in concert with the speaker to chill speech or hinder members of the public from addressing the Board. Instead, the Board advised Ms. Graham that her public comment time had expired. Accordingly, there is no basis for this office to conclude that the Board has violated section 2.06(g) of OMA. Because [redacted] did not provide facts to support the allegation that the Board violated OMA's requirements, this office will take no further action in this matter.

In its advisory capacity,[7] the Public Access Bureau reiterates that the General Assembly "declares it to be the public policy of this State that its citizens shall be given advance notice of and **the right to attend all meetings** at which any business of a public body is discussed or acted upon in any way." (Emphasis added.) 5 ILCS 120/1 (West 2024). It appears from [redacted] submission that there have been ongoing conflicts between members of the public during and/or after Board meetings, and that the Board already provides security at meetings and in the parking lot. If these tensions persist or escalate, the Board may wish to consider whether additional measures are necessary to ensure that members of the public are not discouraged from exercising their right to attend Board meetings.

This letter serves to close this file. If you have questions, please contact me at the Chicago address listed on the first page of this letter.

Very truly yours,

[redacted]

CHRISTINA LUCENTE-MCCULLOUGH
Assistant Attorney General
Public Access Bureau

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[7]15 ILCS 205/7(a), (c) (West 2024) (authorizing the Public Access Counselor to provide advice and education to public officials and members of the public).