

EDUCATION

Franklin superintendent, accused of bribery, did not violate law, prosecutor says

BY VALARIE HONEYCUTT SPEARS

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From left, former Franklin County teacher Todd Smith, Bondurant Middle School Principal Whitney Allison and Franklin County Superintendent Mark Kopp *WKYT-TV/FRANKLIN COUNTY SCHOOLS*

Franklin County Superintendent Mark Kopp, indicted for attempted bribery, did not “violate state statute” and no longer faces criminal charges, according to Franklin Commonwealth’s Attorney Larry Cleveland.

[Kopp was indicted for attempted bribery in September.](#) He allegedly asked a deputy sheriff to do him a favor in regard to a failure to report abuse charge against a school principal.

But in a letter dated Nov. 21 to Kopp’s attorney Tom Miller, Cleveland said he had decided not to take further action. Cleveland said while it appears that Kopp’s statements to the deputy “were improper,” they “do not amount” to a violation of state law.

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Cleveland told the Herald-Leader that he made the decision after reviewing grand jury testimony, reviewing a recording of a District Court hearing and reviewing the court record. He said he also talked to Franklin County Attorney Rick Sparks and Franklin Deputy Sheriff Montey Chappell.

“There’s no point in this office pursuing the matter any further,” Cleveland told the Herald-Leader Friday.

Miller said Kopp “is a wonderful man” who had never had an issue with the law in the past.

“This experience has been very difficult on him and his family,” said Miller. “He did nothing wrong. He was simply standing up for his principal. The whole thing got blown out of proportion because there was never any bribe.”

Miller disputed that Kopp said anything improper and said he was simply supporting an employee.

Whitney Allison, the principal of Bondurant Middle School, had been indicted for failure to report child neglect or abuse, a misdemeanor. Her attorney Fred Peters could not immediately be reached Friday, but he said in September that Allison denied the allegations. She was the former principal at Lexington’s Winburn Middle School. Allison’s case is ongoing, according to Franklin District Court records.

The criminal charges were related to a sexual abuse investigation involving a former teacher at Bondurant. Todd Joseph Smith has been charged with two counts of first-degree sexual abuse.

Smith pleaded not guilty and a jury trial is set for January, according to court records.

Kopp’s attorneys said in September that Allison immediately began to investigate an allegation about Smith and determined she needed more information before filing a formal report.

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Staff writer Valarie Honeycutt Spears covers K-12 education, social issues and other topics. She is a Lexington native with southeastern Kentucky roots.

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