

Attorneys: 11 former students prepare to sue over digital camera hidden in Hershey School bathroom

Bob Fernandez,
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Two attorneys representing 11 former students at the Hershey School for poor children have filed documents in Philadelphia Common Pleas Court initiating lawsuits against the 2,000-student boarding institution for invasion of privacy and other misconduct.

Attorney Tom Kline said on Friday the documents relate to the activities of a fired, gun-toting Hershey School employee Marcus Burns, who hid a camera in the bathroom of one of the boarding facilities for senior male students.

The papers he and Harrisburg attorney Benjamin Andreozzi filed - writs of summons - are precursors to lawsuits with specific allegations. Andreozzi's firm specializes in sexual abuse cases and represented 11 victims of Pennsylvania State University's Jerry Sandusky.

Kline said the allegations will be "specifics relating to events that occurred in a Hershey dormitory." He said he and a team at

Kline & Specter have led the investigation and are preparing the suits.

Burns illicitly filmed the boys showering. He pleaded guilty on Sept. 1 to invasion of privacy and possessing three guns on school property. He was sentenced by a Dauphin County judge to a year in prison, court records show, and remains in Dauphin County prison. The Hershey Trust did not have any immediate comment.

The lawsuits add to the trust's legal woes. The \$12 billion trust finances and administers the 2,000-student Hershey School for poor children, mostly from Pennsylvania.

The trust's board is facing an investigation by the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office over compliance with a 2013 deal with Attorney General Kathleen Kane that curbed director compensation and was to refocus the charity on its core educational mission.

Mark Pacella, who oversees non-profits for the attorney general's office, is investigating whether the trust violated the 2013 agreement by overpaying board members and

not attracting education experts to the board. He also has called for the ouster of three long-standing board members, including the chairwoman, vice chairman, and former chairman.

He says Hershey board members should reimburse the trust for improper compensation and reimburse some of the expense for investigating board members.

The Justice Department, meanwhile, is investigating the school for possible violations of the federal Disabilities Act, the second such federal civil rights investigation in four years. The current focus is on whether the school rejects students with physical disabilities and mental-health problems.

On May 23, Dauphin County authorities charged a Hershey School male house parent with improperly touching an 11-year-old girl, the second such case in two years at the school.