

Principles clash over school complaint

7-15-71 By JEDD GOULD
Register Citizen Staff

WINSTED — A woman's desire to publicly air complaints about two school officials has started a debate over the rights a person has to speak out at a public Board of Education meeting and just how public the meeting really is.

Parent Ruth Wheeler wants to tell the board about what she alleges is misconduct by two members of the school staff. And she wants to do it during the public portion of a school board meeting.

Superintendent of Schools Norman T. Michael wants the allegations to be aired behind closed doors and says the Board of Education has the right to restrict Wheeler from bringing her

complaint up during the public portion of its monthly meeting.

Lawyers counseling both sides have made the battle lines clear: The First Amendment rights of the individual have been pitted against the rights of school employees and the Board of Education.

Winsted's Community Lawyer Charlene LaVoie, who spoke at last Tuesday night's school board meeting on Wheeler's behalf, maintains that the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives any individual "the absolute, unfettered right to register a complaint and they have the right to do it in public."

See PRINCIPLES, page 12