

It is with great regret that we find ourselves having the need to respond to the “Open Letter to the Community regarding School Regionalization – July 2020”, which was published by the Mayors of Atlantic Highlands, Highlands and Sea Bright. We are very surprised and disappointed that in the midst of a global pandemic, the likes of which none of us have ever seen, the Mayors have decided to attack our School Districts.

As residents we are very conscious of the burden of taxes. As a board we continuously seek efficiencies in order to run the district in the most fiscally responsible manner. As a result, we are more than willing to explore the concept of regionalization whether that be with Sea Bright and/or other districts that make the most fiscal and educational sense for our communities. In fact, at the recommendation of the Governor’s Shared Services Czars, we recently collectively applied for a LEAP Implementation grant with the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to receive funds for a regional tri-district consolidation study to truly assess the cost-benefit of the various regionalization options that are available to us.

The Mayors’ characterization of our Boards as being dishonest, especially in these uncertain times, is inappropriate. At this time our Boards continue to do everything we can to prepare for the Fall. The Mayors have chosen to go on the offensive in an attempt to drag our Boards into a political campaign while we are utilizing every bit of available manpower and resources to safeguard our children and provide them with a meaningful education via in-person and virtual formats in this brave new world. It is no secret that each and every school district in the State has a limited window of opportunity to plan for the new school year. The timing of the Mayors’ most recent letter appears to be a deliberative attempt to harm our Boards while we focus on some of the most complex issues that have ever faced our community.

The Boards will continue to do whatever we can to properly educate and protect the health and safety of our children. The Boards look forward to conducting their own consolidation/feasibility study, which they hope will be funded through grants. Members of the public can rest assured that the Boards will subsequently share the results of the anticipated study and are certainly open to conducting a town hall meeting to present the results and address any questions or concerns that members of the public may have at that time.