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Red Bank, New Jersey 07701

26 January 2016

Commissioner David Hespe
New Jersey Department of Education
100 Riverview Executive Plaza
P.O. Box 500
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-500

Dear Commissioner Hespe,

Earlier this month, I was asked by Red Bank Mayor Pasquale Menna, to participate on a committee, to review the impact of a recent Red Bank Charter School (RBCS) amendment, could have on Red Bank – its school age children, taxes and the community itself. As background information, I am a founder of the Red Bank Charter School and have supported the school over the years, with the hope of improving the quality of education for all children in Red Bank.

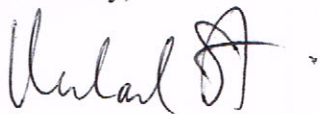
The committee met on three different occasions. Initially we met to discuss “general housekeeping” We met a second time to present financial and academic data, in a public gathering (at the Red Bank Middle School), which was in my opinion, less about the presentation of facts and more about “the life in the day of a Red Bank Borough school child and teacher” – worthwhile, but not appropriate or necessary in our fact finding. The RBCS lead administrator and business administrator chose not to attend this forum. A third and final meeting took place, absent of the administrators from either school, where the committee rendered a decision of “its findings”.

The committee chose to respond to the charter amendment along two issues – demographics of the RBCS children compared to the borough schools and the financial impact to the community regarding potential tax increases. Academic achievement, scores and standards were decided would not be included in the deliberation of this committee because “there were too many variables”. In my view, the issue of greatest importance would be that of academics and the educational wellbeing of the children of Red Bank. The issue with the greatest number of variables actually might be the financial one, due to how funds might or could be appropriated and spent in a given school year. One could argue that adjustments and cuts could be made without affecting the classroom environment. The second issue, the demographics of RBCS, is driven by a lottery system which is the result of charter school law. In this amendment, and as I understand through discussion with the Office of Charter Schools, a “weighted lottery” will be put in place to better serve a disadvantaged school age population.

I truly believe, the information in the RBCS amendment and the response by the Red Bank Board of Education, will be the basis that the Office of Charter Schools can use to make an appropriate recommendation to you, for your ultimate decision. In the end, I hoped the

committee would have taken additional time to understand all the factors affected by this amendment (taxes, demographics and academics), before submitting a report. The committee is comprised of passionate and thoughtful residents of Red Bank. No matter what the outcome of the RBCS amendment, it is my hope that dialogue will be initiated between the schools so that the children benefit. Thank you for your time in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Stasi", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael A. Stasi