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February 27, 2024

VIA USPS PRIORITY MAIL

Kevin Dehmer
Acting Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Education
P.O. Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625

RE: Expansion of the Toms River Regional School District to include Seaside Heights

Dear Commissioner Dehmer:

I am the Board Solicitor for the Toms River Regional Schools Board of Education (“District” or “TRRS”) and as such represent the District in connection with the current application to expand the regional school district to include Seaside Heights. As you know, on or about December 15, 2023, the Borough of Seaside Heights filed a request for authorization for a referendum on the expansion of the District to include the Borough of Seaside Heights, which the Seaside Heights Board of Education and TRRS joined. On February 20, 2024, Central Regional School District filed a response to the request for authorization. The application and subsequent notices to the Ocean County Board of Elections request a March 12, 2024, special election. The reply from the Borough of Seaside Heights, the District, and the Board of Education for Seaside Heights is due on February 28, 2024. I am writing this correspondence to provide an update and, if the election is successful, to request approval to enlarge the number of board members.

Primarily, the Toms River Regional Schools Board of Education’s focus has been and remains what is best for kids, not just TRRS students but also students from Seaside Heights. Throughout the process, Superintendent Michal Citta has consistently stated that Toms River Regional Schools is joining and fully supports Seaside Heights application because it is in the best interest of kids. Throughout this process, all the actions and efforts by TRRS, the Borough of Seaside Heights, and the Seaside Heights Board of Education have been guided by what is best for kids.

Consistency, whether instruction, curriculum, or attendance, is a critical component of successful primary and secondary education. Consistency reduces anxiety, stress, and fear of the



unknown. Through no fault of the kids attending TRRS and Seaside Heights, the process has created uncertainty concerning Hugh J. Boyd Elementary School. To eliminate the uncertainty and maintain consistency TRRS, the Borough of Seaside Heights, and the Board of Education of Seaside Heights have agreed that if the referendum is authorized by you and approved by the voters, Hugh J. Boyd Elementary School will remain open for the 2024-2025 school year and up to four years thereafter, contingent upon enrollment. Simply, for the foreseeable future Seaside Heights elementary school students will continue to go to school at Hugh J. Boyd, and Seaside Heights Board of Education employees will continue to go to work at Hugh J. Boyd.

Further, to address the uncertainty regarding Board of Education composition. The Board of Education of the Toms River Regional School District, under N.J.S.A. 18A:13-46 Enlargement of Regional Districts; New Board Members; Reapportionment is requesting approval to enlarge the size of the Toms River Board of Education from nine members (six members from Toms River, one member South Toms River, Beachwood, and Pine Beach) to eleven members (seven members from Toms River, and one member from South Toms River, Beachwood, Pine Beach, and Seaside Heights).

Finally, to address the uncertainty regarding the election date and time. The due date for TRRS, Borough of Seaside Heights, and the Board of Education of Seaside Heights reply to Central Regional School District's response is February 28, 2024, less than two weeks before the proposed special election date on March 12, 2024. Assuming the referendum is authorized, it is unlikely that the timing of the authorization will afford TRRS, the Borough of Seaside Heights, and the Board of Education of Seaside Heights the opportunity to thoroughly educate the stakeholders and voters by March 12, 2024. Therefore, based on the totality of the circumstances, and pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:13-43, TRRS, the Borough of Seaside Heights, and the Board of Education of Seaside Heights request that the special election "be held on the third Tuesday in April" which is April 16, 2024. It is important to note that the proposed effective date of the expansion of the Toms River Regional School District to include Seaside Heights is June 30, 2024.

Should you have any questions, require additional information, or would like to discuss this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your attention, consideration, and courtesy.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'WRB', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

William R. Burns

cc: Dr. Judith DeStefano-Anen
V. Gagliardi
A. D'Anella