

WALL TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF THE BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR/BOARD SECRETARY
PO Box 1199
Wall, New Jersey 07719-1199

Brian J. Smyth
Custodian of Records

Phone: 732-556-2016
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December 17, 2025

Anonymous Taxpayer
Re: OPRA 26-021

opra+request-84073-31321fe9@requests.opramachine.com

This response is being provided on the 7th business day of the Custodian of Record's receipt of request.

Good afternoon,

The Wall Township Board of Education is in receipt of your emailed request and certification of Sunday, December 7, 2025, at 6:53 PM wherein you requested records as follows:

"Records requested:
The Resignation Letters from Allison Connolly - 2019 and Russell Gartz - 2021"

In response to your request for the resignation letter of Ms. Connolly attached please find a copy of the resignation letter received from Ms. Connolly consisting of 4 pages.

In response to your request for the resignation letter of Mr. Gartz, please know that a search of District records has determined that no record exists that is responsive to your request.

If your request for access to a government record has been denied or unfilled within the seven (7) business days required by law, you have a right to challenge the decision by the Wall Township Board of Education to deny access. At your option, you may either institute a proceeding in the Superior Court of New Jersey or file a complaint with the Government Records Council (GRC) by completing the Denial of Access Complaint Form. You may contact the GRC by toll-free telephone at 866-850-0511, by mail at P.O. Box 819, Trenton, NJ 08625, be-mail at grc@dca.state.nj.us, or at their web site at www.state.nj.us/grc. The GRC can also answer other questions about the law. All questions regarding complaints filed in Superior Court should be directed to the Court Clerk in your County.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Smyth
Custodian of Records

BJS/dc

August 6, 2019

I believe I am supposed to begin with 'To Whom It May Concern,' but that feels far too formal after five years. So...

Dear Brian,

Please accept this letter as formal notification that I am resigning from my position as President and member of the Wall Township Board of Education, effective immediately (August 6, 2019).

Having been on the receiving end of a few of these letters myself, I know that they are meant to be short and to the point. Forgive me for breaking with tradition.

I believe in service to others, and when I first sought election to the Board of Education, I considered it my duty - my obligation - to serve a community that has given me so much. Who I am as a parent, as a teacher, and as a human being begins and ends with being raised in this town. My intentions were - and remain - pure. I wanted to help build a school district we could be proud of, one that would provide opportunities to our students that would set them - and us - apart. I wanted to help distance us from the indignities of the Habel years and cultivate a district that would become the heart of our community. I dedicated countless hours to my work on the Board, serving on almost every committee and chairing many of them, and I have been honored to serve as both Vice President and President.

During my tenure on the Board, I addressed PARCC and other barriers to creative, curriculum driven instruction and helped create new academies that speak to the varied interests of our students. I worked tirelessly to build strong relationships with the community and Superintendent, rooted in transparency and mutual respect. I was deeply involved in the Strategic Planning process and helped craft the new mission and vision for WTPS - one of my most rewarding experiences as a Board member, as the process provided a map for the next five years, and proved what we can accomplish when stakeholders work together. I supported school security measures that balance student safety with their mental and emotional well-being. I mitigated five budget cycles, making fiscally responsible decisions that balanced the needs of the district with those of the taxpayer. I have supported new hiring protocols to stymie nepotism and ensure we hire the best teachers and administrators. I have been commended for bringing greater unity and respect to the Board, both key to fostering dialogue and consensus, which I consider my greatest accomplishment. I promised to be dogged in my pursuit of information, to make well-informed decisions and to always advocate for what is best for the district - and I delivered.

But, now I am done. The primary duty of a Board member is to represent the students - not the taxpayers, not the teachers, but the students - and I no longer feel empowered to do that. This job used to bring with it the satisfaction of accomplishment, the knowledge that the time invested - time that often rivaled what I dedicate to my students and time that was taken away from my family - was worth it. Now, that return on investment has diminished greatly, and at great personal cost. So, I will move on to more rewarding endeavors. Leaving the dais allows me to pursue avenues and opportunities that would not be available otherwise, and to fulfill my passion for education and social justice.

I was blindsided by much of what was contained within the 'no confidence' documents sent to the Board by the WTASC and the WTEA, as neither bargaining unit had previously articulated such deep-seated and multitudinous areas of concern regarding the educational leader of the district. One would think - would hope, really - that, if things were as disconcerting as described, the Board would have known sooner. Further, as someone who read both documents closely, several times over, I find it troubling that there are issues presented by the bargaining units that lack veracity, while others cast blame on the Superintendent for actions taken by the Board. I also question the methodology employed by both units in the voting process and, therein, the validity of the results. Moreover, as both a teacher and proud union member, I am somewhat aghast that fellow educators would choose to align with the chief proponents of outsourcing, privatization, and austerity budgets in town. I worry that they jumped on a bandwagon with little thought as to where it might be headed.

In addition to representing the students, it is the Board's primary responsibility to hire and evaluate the Superintendent. Our superintendent began her tenure one month before I took my seat on the dais. Since that time, Mrs. Dyer has led this district with a profound passion for education and with an unwavering dedication to the students, staff, and stakeholders. She is smart, competent and capable - a textbook example of what an educational leader should be. We have disagreed vehemently on various issues, but we have always been able to compromise and build consensus, to work in the best interest of the district. I have no idea why anyone would want the Board President - or any Board member - and the Superintendent to have a relationship unlike this. Antagonism is not in the best interest in the district. Mutual trust and respect, however, promotes progress. As a parent, as a teacher and as a (now former) Board of Education member, I find Mrs. Dyer to be exceptional at her job; it is unfortunate that she is not recognized as such. And, while I understand that the Appellate Division of the New Jersey Superior Court overturned the ruling of the ALJ, the affirmation of the Commissioner of Education and the direction of the Executive County Superintendent, I still believe that the lawsuit regarding the Superintendent's contract was frivolous, without merit and politically expedient. Further, I stand by my assertion that those behind it purposefully and cynically played on the fears of our

community and intentionally undermined the progress we have made, unnecessarily casting negative limelight on our town.

The district has less than a year to find a new Superintendent. This will no doubt be a trying process, as I am certain that any interested candidates worth their salt will research this district before applying. Imagine their reactions to the news stories they will inevitably read or the meetings they will undoubtedly watch. The palpable rancor in town will undoubtedly cull the pool of well-qualified, interested applicants.

The lawsuit brought against the Board and the Superintendent regarding her contract will thus damage this district in ways never imagined by those who supported it, and the reverberations will be further complicated now that the Superintendent caps have been lifted in totality. If you do your research, you will find that the superintendents who are making strides in this state, those winning 'Superintendent of the Year' accolades and those touting remarkable school performance scores - everything the public is demanding for Wall Township - have several things in common. They come to the position with Central Office experience. They have doctoral degrees. They are well compensated. The community must commit to the same for Wall Township or admit that their outcry against the current Superintendent is hyperbolic at best.

Similar to the Superintendent, you, Mr. Smyth, have also been subjected to unrelenting and spurious attacks that border on slanderous. Rather than being judged on your own record, you have instead been held accountable for the sins of others - sins you did not commit. This detracts from the meaningful work you are actually doing as the Business Administrator. I admire your grace under fire and appreciate the guidance you have provided me throughout the years. You are intelligent and capable, and have been an invaluable resource. You have my unyielding respect and should have that of any person who has worked with you.

For years, the Board worked to find a location for a new transportation compound that was both cost-effective and prudent. Outsourcing was neither a viable option or a good fit for Wall. Anyone who tells you otherwise is not arguing in good faith. The district tried to use its own land, but NIMBY sentiment quashed that plan. With almost every option exhausted, we struck a deal with Howell, one that smacked of some outstanding outside-the-box thinking and was mutually beneficial to both districts. It also freed up millions of dollars for other capital projects, specifically the installation of air conditioning district-wide. Yet, this wasn't good enough for some prominent critics and, as many in the community rallied around these naysayers, it became obvious that most did so without knowing the time and effort dedicated to working this problem - despite the availability of abundant information to that point.

The situation with the transportation compound is endemic of a much bigger issue. Wall faces many challenges ahead. But the Board needs to be able to face those challenges with a community that is supportive, and well informed. Too often, that is not the case. It is hard for a Board to function, nevermind function well, in an environment rife with inaccuracies, rumor, and innuendo. Truth and basic facts have a hard time breaking through. Trust is hard to establish.

Too many rely on social media and a few self-appointed saviors of the school district to provide them with their ‘facts’ and their opinions. This was apparent yet again in the final weeks of the school year, when people took to social media to complain about the lack of air conditioning in the schools. Few were aware that, in February, millions of dollars had been dedicated to a district-wide HVAC project, the details of which had been shared with the community at both Board meetings and through the local press. This willful ignorance is both regrettable and dangerous.

While I appreciate the hard work and dedication of our PTOs and PTGs - to whom I faithfully donate my money and, when available, my time - I find it ridiculous that they held the district hostage over facility use fees. These organizations were designed to provide what was explicitly deemed supplemental to the budget, yet budgeted funds are being demanded to underwrite their endeavors. This hardly makes sense. Then again, some members of the Board are guilty of the same shortsightedness. Under the guise of ‘tax relief,’ several Board members voted against including additional state aid in this year’s budget. As a result, around \$150,000 was left on the table, despite pleas - including my own - to utilize this money for negotiations or other district needs. Now, with a settled contract in place, the district finds itself (about \$150,000) short on budgeted funds and will have to reduce another account in order to compensate for this shortfall. I might only be a history teacher, but this math simply doesn’t make sense to me.

Despite the difficulties and division that have been present throughout my tenure on this Board, I am proud of what has been accomplished. I am hopeful for the district's future, but I look toward it with trepidation as well. The success of our children is in your hands, as well as the Superintendent’s, and at the mercy of the remaining Board members. I hope you all prove the stewards they deserve. It has been a distinct pleasure to work with you, Mr. Smyth, and with Superintendent Dyer, and to serve with most of my fellow Board members. I wish you all the best in your continued efforts on behalf of this district that I love.

Respectfully,

Allison D. Connolly