

GREENWICH TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

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April 27, 2016 Opening Remarks

Provided by Member Kevin Bayne on behalf of the Greenwich Township BOE

Thank you all for coming this evening. As some of you probably know, the Board has decided to consider a consolidation/merger with the Bloomsbury School District. Tonight we will vote on whether or not to contract with the Comegno Law Group to perform a feasibility study. This is the beginning of a very long process during which the community will be involved. This is not a decision that we have made lightly, but is the result of many months of discussion.

A feasibility study is a legal analysis that includes the pros and cons of merging. It is expected to provide answers to many of our questions, including but not limited to: the effects any merger would have on the tax rate, optimal school building usage, an overall timeline of the merger, and collective bargaining and staffing issues. This study will enable the Board and the community to make an informed decision regarding a possible merger with Bloomsbury. If after we review the results of the study and this Board feels it make sense to pursue a merger with Bloomsbury, it does require a vote by both towns.

You are probably thinking, what's in it for Greenwich? How does this benefit our township and our school district? As a school district, we have few areas where we can increase our revenue. We created the integrated preschool program and the child care program, both of which have met the needs of our community and generated revenue for the district. We became a school choice district and generate approximately \$180,000/year in revenue. We lobbied the Department of Education for more school choice seats, but the NJDOE capped the enrollment of all school choice districts thereby curtailing program growth. Bloomsbury is a Choice School District with 33 school choice seats. We are hopeful the NJDOE will combine the total number of school choice seats if our districts merge, but we will learn more about that when we meet with the NJDOE Executive County Superintendents. It is extremely difficult for school districts in New Jersey to create revenue producing opportunities. When the Bloomsbury Board of Education approached us about the possibility of consolidating, we felt it was in the best interests of our township and our school district to take the necessary steps to see if this merger will benefit both communities by helping sustain our financial stability while also enhancing our students' educational opportunities. The results of the feasibility study should provide some insight into these areas. I also want to point out to everyone that the potential merger has nothing to do with our relationship with the Phillipsburg School District. Everything on that side will remain status quo.

In January 2016 we formed an ad-hoc committee of the Board which was designed to explore the possibility of merging with the Bloomsbury School District. That committee is comprised of myself, Brad Perrone, Denise Valle, Christy Tighe and Superintendent Eppolite. NJDOE regulations require our committee to meet with the Executive County Superintendents of both Warren and Hunterdon Counties and with the Bloomsbury BOE committee. We are inviting two members of the public to join us in this endeavor and become members of this committee. If anyone is interested in becoming a member of this committee, please contact Superintendent Eppolite via email at eppolitem@gtsd.net no later than May 6.

In a minute we will open up the floor for questions and comments but first I would like to remind everyone that at this point, we do not have many answers beyond what I just explained. Tonight we will listen to all questions and comments and provide what answers we can at the end of the session. If you are unable to stay until the end, don't worry, we will be writing down all questions and in a few days will publish a Q&A document on the Greenwich Township School District website at www.gtsd.net. The GTSD website will be the warehouse of all official communication. If you hear something other than what is on the website, either through social media or word of mouth, please know that it is conjecture and not based on information from the Board. Thank you again for coming tonight and your anticipated support.