

It is important that I update our community as to the status of the litigation by which our Board is seeking to end our sending/receiving relationship with the Pleasantville Board of Education and send our high school students to Absegami High School, administered by the Greater Egg Regional Board.

As you know, we should be in the middle of the hearing that had been scheduled by the court. More specifically, the "court" is an administrative law judge who acts as a hearing officer to make recommendations to the Commissioner of Education. However, the administrative law judge has postponed the hearing. Even though some hearings are proceeding by Zoom, those hearings are generally very brief affairs and most are special education cases required to be heard promptly by state and federal laws.

Our case will probably involve six or seven days of personal testimony. The administrative law judge believes it will be more appropriate for her to assess the credibility of the fact and expert witnesses by having an in-person hearing. As a result, she has rescheduled the hearing for some non-consecutive dates beginning on January 19, 2021 and ending on March 2, 2021. It is possible that those dates too will be postponed, depending on the state of the virus which necessitated the closing of all of our courts in the first place; of course, it is also possible that the administrative law judge will find that continued delay no longer serves the parties, and she could decide to hear the case via a Zoom proceeding at that time. In either event, assuming the hearing is held in the first half of 2021, assuming we are successful, it is possible that we will be able to begin to send our incoming 7th grade students to Absegami in September of 2022. We will, of course, continue to keep you posted.

We should note that the Pleasantville Board of Education has repeatedly sought to delay the proceedings. For a while, those delays were limited to slowing the exchange of necessary information, the details of which are not necessarily pertinent for a public discussion. However, earlier this month, the Pleasantville Board of Education filed a motion seeking an indefinite delay in the proceedings, based upon a complaint filed over a year ago in Mercer County Superior Court by a number of public interest groups asserting that the State needed to take certain measures to desegregate New Jersey's Public Schools. As our attorneys do not believe the relief sought there could or should have any impact on our case, we would be allowed to leave Pleasantville if we can demonstrate that our departure would not impose a substantial negative racial, educational, or financial impact on any of the districts. Our experts have determined that it would not, thus we will be opposing Pleasantville's motion.

We remain committed to making sure that Absecon's students can get the best public education available, and that they can get that education in a matter that involves a wise expenditure of taxpayer money. This is limited not simply to the operation of our district, but also to the district(s) we pay to educate our high school students. We believe that an opportunity to leave Pleasantville and attend Absegami will serve our students and our community well. Thank you.