

On Wed, Jul 11, 2018 at 2:08 PM, Kelley Johnson <kelley.m.johnson77@gmail.com> wrote:

Scott,

Following up on our conversation, I believe the Board has a duty to make all decisions in terms of the "educational welfare of the children" in accordance with Chapter 12, Section 18A:12-24.1 of the NJ statutes and our BOE's Bylaw 9271 (part of the Code of Ethics). Additionally, per Section 18A:11-1 of the NJ statutes, the Board shall "perform all acts and do all things, consistent with law and the rules of the state board, necessary for the lawful and proper conduct, equipment and maintenance of the public schools of the district."

Unless the state's perimeters for the funds require a reduction in taxes, I don't see how our Board can argue that a decision to use any funds for tax relief this year meets these standards. When our school has been so underfunded for years, and we are spending much less per pupil than neighboring districts, it is hard for me to imagine how tax relief is a decision made in terms of the educational welfare of the children. It also seems to me that all state funds are needed for the proper conduct and maintenance of the school.

As I mentioned in our short conversation, I may mention this in public comments at tomorrow's meeting, depending on the budget presentation and the other public comments. I did not want to blind side anyone by mentioning ethical duties for the first time in a public meeting, which is why I called you. Accordingly, I am copying the board on this email so that they are aware of my thoughts.

I would also like to again reiterate that absent a state directive, tax relief seems to be an invitation to the state to discontinue any additional funding received this year in the next few years. We all know that this fight will continue for years as state budgets are negotiated and the now-overfunded districts fight to retain their overfunding in court and at the state house. It will be an uphill battle for Chesterfield to argue that we must retain our additional funding and receive more funding to get us closer to 100% when the funds we did receive were used to provide a relatively small amount of tax relief per household. This will be compared to overfunded districts who will be yelling about all the educational services they must cut because of their loss of state aid. I can envision the soundbites now, stating that a wealthy district like Chesterfield with a median income of over \$140,000/year/household (using Terran's numbers) used part of its new state funding to provide a \$250/household tax refund (assuming roughly 1/3 of the additional \$1.5 million in state funding is used for a refund, based on my rough calculation of 2000 households in Chesterfield) while Jersey City, with a median household income of \$60,703 (taken from the US Census website), was forced to raise its taxes because its aid was reallocated to Chesterfield. I suggest that the Board consult with its attorney and the state board of ed, and perhaps someone from Senator Sweeney's office, before making any decisions to use funds for tax relief.

Regards,

Kelley

—
Scott Heino

Superintendent

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