

June 8, 2021

Dr. Chestnut-Lee
Julio Sanchez, Board President
Pleasantville School Board Members

Dear Sirs and Madam:

Please accept this letter from the Mainland/Pleasantville NAACP in conjunction with the New Jersey Coalition Against Racial Exclusion (NJ-CARE) led by Pastor Willie Dwayne Francois. Together we are representing hundreds of members of our community who have spoken out in various ways (including a one hundred person march from Pleasantville High School to Absecon Veterans Park) against the Absecon School District severing the send-receive agreement with the Pleasantville School High School. As one of the spokespersons for this coalition, I have come before you numerous times on this matter. As the Board of Education, a new vote and how you vote on this matter now rests with you.

We have been told that when the board voted in March of this year to drop its opposition to Absecon's severance petition it was, in part, because the board did not have all the information needed and/or the board did not fully appreciate the impact of that decision on the district and/or was not aware of the intense level of support in the community and among the voters, taxpayers and parents to continue the fight.

We trust now that you have the needed information and are aware of the overwhelming community support, and the broader context of this issue, that you will vote to reverse your earlier decision, and go on record as having done so, before it is too late to do so.

Many Pleasantville residents expressed their opposition to the Absecon's petition in the form of formal objections to the acting commissioner of education. The objection stated:

The Pleasantville district originally objected to this petition. Parents and residents were assured that they would have a chance to testify before an administrative law judge in opposition to Absecon's segregation petition. Yet suddenly and surreptitiously, a majority of the Pleasantville School board withdrew its opposition and thus deprived us of our rights to oppose Absecon's segregation petition. A majority of the Pleasantville Board have taken this action: 1) without appropriate notice, 2) without any satisfactory explanation, 3) contrary to the clear and manifest will of the parents and voters in the Pleasantville School district, and 4) in legal defiance of its obligation to protect the constitutional rights of Pleasantville Students.

As a result of this action parents, residents, educators as well as civil rights and education experts and advocates have been denied a hearing to argue against Absecon's petition in front of an Administrative Law Judge. On at least two occasions a hearing was scheduled and canceled (presumably because of the Covid-19 restrictions) and then withdrawn after the sudden reversal

of the Pleasantville School Board's curious decision to withdraw their objections. without notifying voters, residents, taxpayers, the local NAACP or parents of their sudden decision to withdraw their formal opposition thus denying the people of Pleasantville the opportunity and the right to argue against Absecon's proposal.

We know, as a voice of the community, when you know better you do better. As representatives of our voices, we expect to have our concerns listened to. We also know that it is within your power to resend the prior vote so the right of the students and residents in this community will not be ignored and trampled upon, leaving us as a 100% Black and Brown community. As you know, research has consistently shown that a more diverse community is better educated, more productive and healthier one than a segregated one. Challenging Absecon's petition is the right thing to do!

We trust that this matter will be reconsidered TONIGHT in a full and public vote of the school board and that the Acting Commissioner of Education is immediately informed of this important and historic decision for civil rights, racial justice and educational opportunity for all students.

Sincerely,

Olivia C. Caldwell
President
MLPV NAACP