



The Avalon Home and Land Owners Association

MAY 2008 – TERRENCE CROWLEY, CAPE MAY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

The Chair introduced Terrence Crowley, Executive Superintendent of Schools for Cape May County.

It was stated that the State Legislature passed laws 1 year ago requiring school districts to be cost effective. CORE legislation requires a study to identify areas where school districts can save money. A controversial item is the possible regionalization and/or combination of school districts. Two years ago the state proposed the concept of county school systems and asked for county-wide district guinea pigs. Most counties were opposed to the idea.

There are several non-operating districts in Cape May County, notable Cape May Point and West Wildwood, which have no schools and send students on a paid tuition basis to other districts. These could certainly be looked at for regionalization.

A report has to be prepared by year-end with recommendations for the future. At the moment the business side of operations is being studied, e.g., transportation to other districts, better organization of bus routes, consolidation of bus routes, bulk purchasing of supplies, etc.

A big problem is the requirements for special education students, especially transportation – how can costs be saved. Programs may have to be individualized to fit the needs of the youngster. A database of these youngsters is being developed to determine their needs.

When one looks at regionalization one has to gather data on the needs – building issues, transportation, teachers (how would they be consolidated, do they have the necessary certification, etc.). The County wants to have a workable plan that is based on facts. Input is needed from people in the schools and the communities.

The funding formula for schools was, in 2000/2001, deemed unconstitutional and as a result schools got no new funding. In 2008 the children are funded, not the districts, and this funding is based on the number of children. In Cape May County enrolment has fallen by 1700 between 2000 and 2007, while the alleged property wealth has increased by more than 100%. The income level of residents has also increased (based on the NJ income tax returns). People with children are leaving the County, or the children have graduated. People moving into the county have higher incomes. This goes against increased state aid.

Based on the formula the County should receive less than it does currently. The formula will go away in three years. There is not much sympathy in Trenton for the inhabitants of Cape May County because of the taxes being paid.

Stone Harbor and Avalon share a Superintendent, and share business services such as purchasing and pooled insurance.

The State Commissioner of Education wants everything to be considered, every issue is on the table. It should be noted that the County Supervisors do not have the authority to mandate, everything goes to the voters for approval, however, if a proposal is turned down then the full costs fall on the community.

In answer to questions Mr. Crowley expressed the need to reach out to schools, municipalities, taxpayers, teachers, etc. during the analysis process.

There has been little consolidation of school districts in the state, and in South Jersey there has been the dissolution of a regional school district.

If regionalization occurs all assets come to the table. Regional districts can sell property since if the School Board owns the land/property, etc., then that belongs to the school and can be sold.



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Information on funding has to get out to the public, especially in the off-season.

The role of the County Office is to facilitate the process. Any change in government must be voted on. West Wildwood and Cape May Point can be regionalized without a vote since they are non-operating districts.

It would be a good idea to get viewpoints of the children regarding programs, thus it would be important to talk with student government.

In changing the assignment of students to a school the County Board has to review several factors including racial balance, financial balance and educational programs. If any of these are affected then change will not happen.