

In The Matter Of:
Wilmington Education Improvement Commission
Brandywine Springs Elementary School

Public Hearing
December 7, 2015

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IN THE MATTER OF:

WILMINGTON EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION

REDISTRICTING IN THE CITY OF WILMINGTON
AND NEW CASTLE COUNTY: A TRANSITION,
RESOURCE, AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Public Meeting of the Redistricting
Committee of the Wilmington Education
Improvement Commission, taken pursuant to
notice at Brandywine Springs Elementary School,
2916 Duncan Road, Wilmington, Delaware
beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, December 7,
2015, before Jennifer M. Guy, Registered
Professional Reporter and Notary Public.

BEFORE:

JOE PIKA
HENRY HARPER



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1 DR. PIKA: Good evening. I'm Joe
2 Pika, and for those who have not been at a
3 public hearing before, I am the hearing officer
4 for tonight's public hearing.

5 Just a few procedural items for
6 the record. I'll be reading from a script as
7 part of the procedures that are required for an
8 event like this. And later in the script, I'll
9 explain the process of making public comments.

10 Good evening, I declare this
11 public hearing to be open. My name is Joe
12 Pika, I am the co-chair of the Redistricting
13 Committee of the Wilmington Education
14 Improvement Commission. I have been appointed
15 by the chair of that commission to conduct this
16 public hearing.

17 I am here tonight with the
18 co-chair of that committee, Henry Harper, and
19 with Ms. Barbara Rutt, who is a member of the
20 State Board of Education. We also have here at
21 the table a court reporter who is providing a
22 verbatim transcript of tonight's comments.

23 This hearing is on the interim
24 redistricting report that was released on



1 November the 17th, and we are here tonight to
2 gather public comment. This is not a
3 question-and-answer period, which is why Merv
4 Daugherty was having a question-and-answer
5 period just beforehand, so we are restricted by
6 the rules of a public hearing from answering
7 any questions this evening.

8 The hearing provides the
9 Wilmington Education Improvement Commission and
10 the State Board of Education with an
11 opportunity to receive public comment on the
12 interim report. It will be necessary for each
13 speaker to come forward and clearly identify
14 him or herself by name and affiliation before
15 beginning to speak so that the court reporter
16 will be able to note who you are in the
17 transcript. The record of this hearing and the
18 other four hearings will be provided to the
19 members of the Wilmington Education Improvement
20 Commission and the members of the State Board
21 of Education together with any written or
22 electronic comments received at this hearing or
23 outside of this hearing between November the
24 17th and January the 14th.



1 This meeting is also being
2 recorded, and that recording will also be
3 posted and shared with the State Board for
4 their review.

5 We'll proceed in the following
6 manner: We'll take comments from anyone who
7 desires to speak. There are sign-up sheets at
8 the back of the room as you entered, and those
9 wishing to offer testimony during the hour and
10 a half provided for the public hearing must
11 sign up. The sign-up began at 6:00 p.m. and
12 will come to an end at 7:30, at which time we
13 will collect the remaining sign-up sheets.
14 Individuals will speak in the order in which
15 they have signed up. We'll begin with the
16 first sign-up sheets now, if you would bring
17 that forward.

18 Each individual will have three
19 minutes to speak, and each group will be
20 allowed five minutes. Those giving testimony
21 will be given a 30-second warning by our
22 timekeeper down here in the front, and then
23 will be told to stop when their time is up.

24 Again, for those who have come



1 this evening with questions, I'm sorry, the
2 procedural guidelines don't allow us to answer
3 questions during the public hearing. There are
4 some question-and-answer information materials
5 at the back of the room as you enter.

6 For those speaking, you'll have
7 to come up this way and we'll swing the
8 microphone so you'll be able to use this, so
9 everyone will be able to hear your comments.

10 All right?

11 Our first speaker for the evening
12 is Bill Doolittle.

13 MR. DOOLITTLE: My name is Bill
14 Doolittle; I'm a volunteer advocate for
15 children at risk, including children in
16 poverty, children with disabilities, and
17 English language learners. While the WEIC
18 framework still has a number of problems which
19 may cause it not to move forward, even with
20 that, this is the best opportunity to allow our
21 children at risk to meet the potential that has
22 been available in 40 years.

23 With that said, I'm also a parent
24 of Brandywine Springs, so I'll talk about what



1 you've not heard, what this will do to help my
2 child and other children like him and what it
3 will cost.

4 For Brandywine, once fully
5 implemented with fidelity, it will mean four
6 additional teachers and counselors to implement
7 school-wide social, emotional, and trauma
8 supports; to allow for lower teacher-student
9 ratios and extended learning opportunities. As
10 school-wide support, these will be available to
11 every child that needs them. It will allow for
12 an additional dedicated teacher for English
13 language learner teacher and two more special
14 education teachers to make sure children at
15 risk in our classrooms are much better
16 supported and ready to learn. Our elementary
17 school children from communities from high
18 poverty will arrive into middle school on grade
19 level and ready to learn.

20 When implemented with fidelity,
21 for the other middle and high schools, the
22 change will be even more dramatic with 12 to 20
23 additional teachers and counselors to make sure
24 all children are fully supported and ready to



1 learn when they walk into the classroom.

2 Red Clay, like many districts,
3 currently directs the vast majority of its
4 flexible funds to our children in poverty.
5 With the poverty and English language learner
6 dedicated unit funding in the WEIC plan, those
7 existing flexible funds will be able to be
8 equitably distributed to support all children,
9 including significant opportunities for
10 enrichment and gifted programs.

11 So what will this do to our local
12 taxes? Unlike our base education funding, for
13 which local taxes pay for 35 to 40 percent, if
14 properly structured, state and federal should
15 provide close to 90 percent of the funding
16 without the educational portion of the state
17 budget going beyond its historic percentage
18 range. Again, when properly structured, no
19 district will need to raise their local taxes
20 more than an average district that does not
21 have high concentration of poverty.

22 So properly structured, what will
23 it take? For the poverty support component,
24 about \$60 phased in over three years for the



1 average Red Clay property owner.

2 The WEIC plan goes far beyond
3 just our schools and brings in our non-profit
4 support organizations, businesses, and other
5 governmental agencies to strengthen our school
6 communities and families of our children at
7 risk. The WEIC plan is just the starting
8 point, and will only reach the goal using best
9 practices and a proper structure if parents,
10 educators, and the communities' voices are
11 heard loudly and consistently in Dover this
12 spring. Thank you.

13 DR. PIKA: Thank you,
14 Mr. Doolittle.

15 Lisa Capretto.

16 MS. CAPRETTO: I misunderstood
17 the structure of the evening, and I have more
18 questions, so I'll decline to comment. Thank
19 you.

20 DR. PIKA: Joan Pearson?

21 MS. PEARSON: Ditto the other
22 one.

23 DR. PIKA: Brian Cunningham.

24 MR. CUNNINGHAM: I'll decline, as



1 well. Thank you.

2 DR. PIKA: Joe Greigg.

3 MR. GREIGG: Greetings. My name
4 is Joe Greigg; I am a resident of the Red Clay
5 School District, and I have been supportive of
6 the district's efforts, both on the council at
7 the district level and currently at the John
8 Dickinson High School Citizen's Advisory
9 Council.

10 Which one of these is it active?

11 DR. PIKA: The one on the left is
12 the official one.

13 MR. GREIGG: There's a Chinese
14 aphorism, it's called chasing the dragon. It
15 refers to the opium dens in China where they
16 were sitting smoking opium and saying
17 everything will be fine. Unfortunately, if
18 this goes through, it's not going to be fine.
19 Neither the state nor the City of Wilmington
20 have the will or the finances to give the
21 district the additional money that this move
22 will certainly require.

23 Secondly, I spoke at the last
24 meeting of the school board. My major concern



1 with this is it will do nothing whatsoever for
2 the children in Wilmington. Secondly, I
3 characterize its effect on our general
4 admission high schoolers, not the charter
5 schools, as transforming them into cesspools of
6 mediocrity. Why did I say that? Very simply,
7 it will increase the racial concentration of
8 African Americans. Every study anywhere has
9 said that that leads to a decrease in test
10 scores of that group; it leads to a decrease in
11 the graduation rate of those students; it
12 increases the dropout rate of those students.

13 Red Clay has done remarkably well
14 the past several years. If this goes ahead,
15 adverse selection will occur. We will see more
16 students, especially students with two-parent
17 households, move their children out of the
18 district schools. My eldest daughter and her
19 son moved out of the southern Wilmington, took
20 a \$50,000 loss on their new home, and moved to
21 the Red Clay District less than a year ago.
22 We've already taken one child out of the
23 district school pattern and put her into one of
24 the better private schools within the district.



1 This does not bode well for the future of the
2 Red Clay District. I urge that -- 30-second
3 warning, or 30-minute warning? 30 second?

4 I urge that this be declined.
5 It's not good for the children of the city,
6 it's not good for the children of the Red Clay
7 District, and it does nothing whatsoever but
8 detract from the remarkable progress that this
9 district has made. Thank you very much.

10 DR. PIKA: Thank you, Mr. Greigg.
11 Susan Arruda.

12 MS. ARRUDA: Hi, I'm Susan
13 Arruda. I'm a retired teacher, taught for 30
14 years. I live in Red Clay. Currently I do
15 volunteer work with -- I'm a CASA,
16 court-appointed special advocate, and I'm also
17 an educational surrogate parent, both dealing
18 with children who are in foster care and an
19 educational surrogate parent for the child that
20 has special needs and is in foster care. And I
21 spend about two hours a week at Highlands
22 Elementary School as a volunteer in a second
23 grade classroom.

24 I've seen the differences between



1 the city's schools and the suburban schools.
2 To the remark that was made earlier about band
3 and chorus that are offered, quote, in all the
4 schools, some of the city schools don't have
5 those programs. It's difficult sometimes to
6 even get -- one of the schools didn't have a
7 guidance counselor this year, and I wrote a
8 letter to Dr. Daugherty saying you have to get
9 a guidance counselor there.

10 My biggest concern has to do with
11 the legislature. If you read the article
12 yesterday about funding the schools that was in
13 the News Journal, Greig Lavelle, who is my
14 representative but lives in North Wilmington,
15 says that he doesn't feel that this is all
16 going to pass, that the legislature is not
17 going to pass, not going to close in the
18 article. He says it's going to be very
19 difficult. He says that the commission leaders
20 should have been able to show specific savings
21 or efficiencies the school system can find or
22 ask for more money, and that issue really
23 concerns me. Does that mean the schools have
24 to save money, the Red Clay District has to



1 show that it can save money? The state has to
2 show? I think all the schools should be
3 treated fairly.

4 His other concerns is that the
5 downstate legislators are not going to fund
6 this because it only concerns Wilmington
7 schools. Having been a teacher for 30 years,
8 we need to treat all the kids and all the
9 schools equally. Thank you.

10 DR. PIKA: Thank you, Ms. Arruda.

11 Lynne Howard.

12 MS. HOWARD: Good evening. My
13 name is Lynne Howard, it's L-Y-N-N-E;
14 H-O-W-A-R-D. I'm here representing WESTT,
15 which is the Wilmington Education Strategy
16 Think Tank. We the members of the Wilmington
17 Education Strategy Think Tank appreciate the
18 depth of the work that has been put into the
19 commission's interim plan entitled
20 Redistricting in the City of Wilmington and New
21 Castle County, a transition resource and
22 implementation plan.

23 As the commission is aware, our
24 group of concerned citizens has been working



1 since 2013 to develop, prioritize, and advance
2 specific goals for the benefit of Wilmington
3 students, including, one, the reduction of
4 districts that serve the city; two, the
5 development of an equitable weighted funded
6 formula addressing student need; and three, the
7 establishment of an authoritative role for
8 Wilmington in the continuous improvement of the
9 education of its residents.

10 We were pleased to see these
11 priorities reflected in the WEIC
12 recommendations earlier this year, and in
13 endorsing the action agenda, we committed to
14 supporting viable action steps and
15 resource-oriented proposals. The ideas
16 presented here and the ongoing work are
17 evidence of that commitment.

18 WESTT supports the commission's
19 plan with conditions. We believe that there
20 are several key principles that must be the
21 foundation of the ongoing work of commission,
22 state, and the general assembly for any plan to
23 succeed. Our continued support will be based
24 on indication that these are accepted and



1 pursued.

2 First, resources first. The
3 transformation of the structure of school
4 funding to be weighted toward student need is
5 critical, and achieving this must take
6 precedence in the 2016 legislative session.

7 Next, address concentrated
8 poverty. The continued proliferation and
9 maintenance of schools of highly concentrated
10 poverty and its inequitable distribution of
11 resources is unacceptable.

12 Next, commitment to equity.
13 Policies to ensure equity must be central to
14 any process moving forward at every level.

15 Fourth, no opting out. Colonial
16 and Brandywine School Districts' status quo
17 positions are unacceptable.

18 And lastly, get the metro
19 district right. A consolidated metropolitan
20 city/county school district is highly
21 desirable, but we feel further deliberation is
22 needed regarding the configurations to ensure
23 the above priorities are pursued.

24 We have included a table on



1 page 3 of our written testimony that will be
2 submitted tomorrow to further explain these
3 positions, and have attached reports on WESTT's
4 position on school funding reform. We take
5 seriously our responsibility to facilitate the
6 best possible opportunities for our younger
7 citizens to succeed. We thank the members of
8 the commission for doing the same and seeing
9 the value in our expertise. We look forward to
10 continuing to work together towards these ends.
11 Sincerely, the Wilmington Education Strategy
12 Think Tank, including Raye Jones-Avery,
13 executive director, Christina Cultural Arts
14 Center; Nnamdi Chukwuola, Wilmington City
15 Councilman and chair of the Education Youth and
16 Families Committee; Theopolis K. Gregory, Sr.,
17 president, Wilmington City Council; Shannon
18 Griffin, community organizer, ACLU of Delaware;
19 myself, Lynne Howard, consultant, Christina
20 Cultural Arts Center; Dr. Jacqueline Jenkins,
21 chief strategy advisor, Office of the Mayor of
22 the City of Wilmington; Kathleen MacRae,
23 executive director, ACLU of Delaware; Brook
24 Moore, special projects, Office of the Mayor of



1 the City of Wilmington; Maurice Pritchett,
2 chief executive officer, Pritchett Associates;
3 and Jea P. Street, New Castle County Council.

4 Thank you very much for your attention.

5 DR. PIKA: Thank you very much,
6 Ms. Howard.

7 The next speaker is Jerry
8 Valesquez.

9 MR. VALESQUEZ: Good evening. My
10 name is Jerry Valesquez, and I'm also from the
11 City of Wilmington.

12 While I come here as an
13 individual, I also come wearing another hat,
14 which is a board member of the Thomas Edison
15 Charter School.

16 As we clearly heard from the
17 previous speaker from WESTT, resources come
18 first. And I say that because of the
19 following. While a lot of effort was spent
20 putting this particular report together, I
21 would challenge everybody in this room: Who
22 could go home tomorrow and speak to their
23 significant other and say to them I've got a
24 plan to do something, I just haven't figured



1 out how to pay for it, and would get
2 concurrence from that significant other?
3 That's a big problem with this particular
4 report.

5 And I say that because the other
6 half hat that I wear is as a construction
7 manager. My specialty is building schools and
8 hospitals. And the things that concern me as
9 you read through this report is the following.
10 A lot of statistics is given. It's a 300-page
11 report; it does not make it easy reading. But
12 when you look at some of the data that's given,
13 it's more than concerning. On average, the
14 four traditional school districts, proficiency
15 rating, the average proficiency that they show
16 on page 14 is 67 percent for non-low-economic
17 students, 54 percent for low economic students,
18 and 42 percent for low economic children from
19 the City of Wilmington.

20 The charter school industry, and
21 again, I'm not here to advocate on behalf of
22 the charters schools, but since they do
23 represent a significant portion of the
24 educational system in the City of Wilmington,



1 especially if you consider as per this report,
2 30 percent of the children of the City of
3 Wilmington are currently enrolled in charter
4 schools, charter schools on the average are
5 producing 68 percent of children that are
6 proficient; 63 percent of low economic children
7 that are proficient; and 56 percent of a low
8 economic proficient. And almost the same with
9 the math scores that were given.

10 I think the other problem, I
11 think this is also very important, when you
12 consider the schools that are going to be
13 transferred over from the Christina School
14 District to the Red Clay, of the four schools
15 that are mentioned in the report, something
16 like all of the schools have less than 50
17 percent occupancy right now. I don't think
18 that we can understand right now what the cost
19 of renovating those schools are going to be.

20 The other two things, because
21 time is short, that I just want to mention that
22 exists in the report is that there is a
23 statement on page 167, it says a Wilmington
24 transition fund is approved with initial



1 allocation of funding for fiscal year 2107. I
2 think 2107 is a typo; I just want to bring it
3 to everyone's attention that that's it. The
4 other typo that I think is significant and
5 worth mentioning is the fact that -- if I can
6 find it very quickly -- is that there's a
7 statement that is made, the process and joint
8 plan must recognize that the staffing needs of
9 the Christina School District may depend upon
10 changes in the configuration of schools and the
11 two programs and new programs as a result of
12 the changes in the enrollment due to
13 redistricting. The Christina plan should be
14 completed by the spring of 2016-2107.

15 Thank you all for your time, and
16 I just will say that this report has a time-out
17 of March of 2016, and I would hate to think
18 that in a rush to get this approved that we
19 make this a fatal mistake of approving the plan
20 as is. I thank you for your time.

21 DR. PIKA: Thank you,
22 Mr. Valesquez. That's truly long-term
23 planning.

24 Are there any other sheets,



1 speaker sheets? Thank you.

2 The next speaker is James Hanby.

3 MR. HANBY: Good evening, and
4 thank you.

5 I thank the commission for all of
6 the efforts it has put in to make this report
7 and to make this plan for a real change. My
8 names is James Hanby, and I serve as the
9 Justice of the Peace here in New Castle County.
10 I'm also a father and the president of Springer
11 Middle School PTA of the Brandywine School and
12 chair of the Brandywine School District Finance
13 Committee.

14 I'm here tonight to speak only
15 for myself. I do echo Ms. Howard's remarks
16 that I believe that the Brandywine School
17 District has a role to play in this and should
18 step up and do so. I say that I'm here as
19 myself, but for my position, I have a unique
20 vantage point to see the conditions that are
21 now existing in the City of Wilmington. While
22 some may say that the judiciary should not
23 speak on this matter, I feel that if I stay
24 silent now, it's no better than saying that the



1 status quo is okay, and it is not. It is, in
2 fact, morally unacceptable for us to not act.
3 This is our moment. This is, in the words of
4 another judge, the Honorable Collins Seitz, who
5 said you will never be worth your salt if at
6 some time during your life you don't take up a
7 worthwhile cause and fight its fight. This, my
8 friends, is a worthwhile fight. Doing nothing
9 is not an option.

10 I have read the final report of
11 the committee and find much of what is in there
12 items that I agree with. As some speakers have
13 said, there are some things that I don't agree
14 with. But I think it is our best chance to
15 prevent the loss of another generation of city
16 children.

17 I come from Brandywine Hundred.
18 I also come from a broken home, yet I have no
19 problem acknowledging that I am who I am
20 because of the concept of white privilege.
21 Growing up in my home, my home was filled with
22 books, magazines, newspapers. Education was a
23 priority. My father had graduated from college
24 and made education a priority in our lives.



1 Our vacations included trips to Gettysburg,
2 Philadelphia, Washington, and in 1984 we spent
3 a whole month by car going coast to coast.

4 This plan won't provide that kind
5 of home life for kids impacted by these
6 changes. Education, however, is the foundation
7 upon which the difficult conversations of race
8 and culture that John Taylor called for in a
9 2014 speech can be had. We simply have to move
10 forward now. We have heard wait, as Dr. King
11 said in his letter from the Birmingham jail,
12 wait too often has meant never. The appendixes
13 to this report are a record of that, of wait
14 meaning never. We have had report after report
15 that has never taken place. And so now it's
16 time for us to advocate and to move forward.

17 From my view on truancy court, I
18 see the students that come from this district,
19 from the other districts in the county, and I
20 see that they lack in the hope. District court
21 provides some hope because it provides a
22 stability of what each student in the city will
23 be receiving from the districts. And I think
24 that the time is now, the need is known. Doing



1 nothing is not an option. In short, we will no
2 longer accept wait. Our future depends on it
3 not just for Wilmington but the whole State of
4 Delaware.

5 Thank you again for the work that
6 you've done.

7 DR. PIKA: Thank you, Mr. Hanby.
8 Stephen Beaver.

9 MR. BEAVER: Hello, my name is
10 Stephen Beaver; I'm representing myself.

11 I'm not originally from Delaware,
12 I'm from Pennsylvania, and I find the whole
13 school system here pretty odd to say the least.
14 To start off, I'm a little skeptical of this
15 whole plan. A year ago we had a vote to
16 increase taxes, and there were no whispers at
17 all about the Wilmington Education Council,
18 about redistricting everything. And you know,
19 we vote this in, it gets approved, and a couple
20 months later, this whole big plan comes out.

21 I have a sister and
22 brother-in-law that live in Dover, they're both
23 teachers. This plan has been going on for two
24 years, and we didn't hear anything about it.



1 I'm really skeptical as to whether it was on
2 purpose that we didn't hear anything about it
3 until after the vote.

4 I'm not sure if anybody else
5 knows, but to get people involved and have
6 people know the information about this is not
7 very public to everybody. There's not a lot of
8 people here, and if you want to know about
9 this, you've got to search on the Delaware
10 Online, the News Journal. If you're an actual
11 resident that doesn't go online or get the
12 paper, you don't know anything about this.
13 There's people around the corner that have no
14 idea what's going right now. Quite frankly, I
15 only found out because during lunch at work, I
16 go online and check Delaware news to see what's
17 going on and found out about this. Otherwise,
18 I had no idea. And it's only up for a day
19 online, so if you don't know about it, it's not
20 here.

21 So there's not a lot of people
22 that know anything that's going on right now.
23 So you need more public opinion. And quite
24 frankly, the reality is there's not even enough



1 funding for this. The teachers' salaries are
2 already frozen, all the government employees
3 are frozen. And you say there's not going to
4 be an increase in taxes for the Red Clay
5 residents, yet the final proposal says if
6 there's no funding available, we hope the
7 lawmakers can institute a small increment of
8 taxes for the people of Red Clay every year and
9 have no vote on it. That's kind of just taking
10 money after revoting on it before. I'm not
11 sure if anybody knows about that part of the
12 report. That's part of it, too.

13 There's not going to be enough --
14 I'm sorry, a little nervous. But, you know, my
15 problem with Delaware education is you start
16 all these charter schools and you're taking all
17 the people that have money that are helping all
18 the other students that might struggle in
19 classes, they're all going to charter schools
20 and the private schools. And it's going to be
21 very hard to reverse this whole entire cycle
22 that we just started now.

23 I'm torn between saying, yes, I
24 want to help everybody, because my heart wants



1 to help the children in Wilmington and get the
2 kids together. But then my brain says, you
3 know what, this is going to lower my property
4 value by a ton, and nothing is going to help
5 because I just bought a house, and everything
6 is going to go down. And I'm going to bring my
7 kid in the same school, and the scores are
8 going to be lower. So it's a struggle between
9 my brain and my heart.

10 I hope everybody does well, but
11 the reality is this wasn't thought out enough
12 because there's no way you can institute a plan
13 that doesn't have the funding in place first.
14 You can't throw a dart at a board and say this
15 looks good, then come to the end of the whole
16 process and say, how are we going to pay for
17 this, and then try to institute a tax on people
18 by forcing them and without a known, you know.
19 So that's all I've got to say.

20 DR. PIKA: Do we have any others?
21 Let me just remind anyone, anyone who would
22 like to speak should sign up on the sign-up
23 sheets that are in the back of the room. And
24 everyone is welcome to do so. Three minutes



1 each. Can we encourage some others?

2 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Can you clarify
3 the date the comments are due? They're due by
4 tomorrow?

5 DR. PIKA: I think I can. Can I
6 clarify that? If they're received by tomorrow,
7 they will be folded in to the next revision of
8 the interim report. But to be considered by
9 the State Board of Education, they can be
10 submitted any time between now and January the
11 14th.

12 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Thank you.

13 DR. PIKA: We have four
14 additional speakers that have signed up,
15 Patrick Walsh.

16 MR. WALSH: Good evening. I
17 really just came here tonight just to gather
18 information on what this whole thing was about.
19 I'm a little late to the game. And basically
20 on the previous speaker, so that this really
21 wasn't well-publicized, it hasn't been. I,
22 too, went online, got the News Journal, and
23 went through it. It does impact my son who
24 does go to this school; my daughter will be



1 attending next year. So it's a great impact to
2 me.

3 I wouldn't consider myself to be
4 poor, I'm certainly not rich, I come from a
5 hard-working family, been in this Red Clay
6 School District since I was born so it's
7 important to me. I value it, I value living in
8 this district, I chose to stay in this district
9 for the schooling. And the fact that my kids
10 get to go here, I lived right down in Sherwood
11 Park, I was born and raised there. So it's
12 important to me.

13 We've been -- I'm not going to
14 say the dissenting opinions of this plan, we've
15 had two, maybe two people that have come up and
16 said that they're not comfortable with it;
17 everyone else has been very well prepared
18 supporting it. So they've had long advanced
19 knowledge, they've come with papers, very well
20 spoken, all of you. And we've had three people
21 kind of decline to comment tonight because they
22 weren't really sure how the format of the
23 meeting was going to be held, so they weren't
24 prepared.



1 I'm not prepared, but I feel
2 compelled to stand up here and say why is this
3 place not filled with people? How come it's
4 not attended? There's not a lot of people
5 here. So there's got to be a reason why. Is
6 that on purpose, is this thing not publicly
7 spread out so people really can understand what
8 the true intricacies, how is it going to
9 impact, how is it going to affect my kids when
10 they go to school next year when it eventually
11 is redistricted. How is that going to be
12 adversely, or conversely, maybe it will be a
13 good thing. But I don't know that. I can't
14 make an informed decision.

15 So if this gets done quickly like
16 the Lancaster Court apartment thing down the
17 street, how that kind of got done under the
18 dark hours of the day, how does that work? I
19 don't know. So I think I would encourage
20 everybody if you're at all like me and don't
21 have all the facts, you should learn the facts
22 and you should get up here and talk on this
23 thing and voice your opinion.

24 So with respect to that, I'm



1 going to hopefully encourage a couple of other
2 people to get up here and speak, as well.

3 Thank you.

4 DR. PIKA: Thank you, Mr. Walsh.

5 Walt Taplin.

6 MR. TAPLIN: Hi, my name is Walt
7 Taplin, I'm here representing myself. I'm a
8 27-and-a-half year resident of Red Clay. I,
9 too, must apologize for not having read the
10 300-page document. I was not aware that a
11 300-page document existed. I would have been
12 reading it rather than this in my spare time,
13 since I have been retired for a couple of
14 years.

15 What I have been doing for the
16 last, oh, two weeks or so has been trying to
17 get data out of the Delaware Online databases.
18 I can tell you that I started to develop some
19 statistics. I was always a big spreadsheet
20 guy, unlike our governor. And one fact really
21 stuck out in my mind, and that was that
22 according to the websites on each school
23 district, and it's somewhat difficult to
24 coordinate those numbers with the Delaware



1 site, and if you try to get it out, that
2 database out in spreadsheet, it's humongous.
3 So if you want to do it, you better spend a lot
4 of time on it.

5 Now, Brandywine had 10,740
6 students, and the per student was 14,458. Now,
7 I don't know if that's correct or not, but it's
8 very obvious when you look at the rest of the
9 districts, for the most part, New Castle
10 County, there are about 12,200, 12,500, 12,600
11 per student. Now, with the additional students
12 coming in to Red Clay, what's going to happen,
13 it appears we're going to have a super
14 district. And I hope Mr. Daugherty gets
15 compensated for what will probably be somewhere
16 around 17,000 students.

17 We pay for our students now,
18 according to the Website, \$12,368. It was my
19 understanding from a previous meeting that, and
20 I'm not the brightest bulb in the package, but
21 it was suggested or my interpretation of what I
22 was told is that all the districts in New
23 Castle County spend about an equal amount of
24 money. My concern at this point is why isn't



1 Brandywine more involved in this rather than
2 putting it all on Red Clay? Thank you.

3 DR. PIKA: Thank you, Mr. Taplin.

4 Joe Schluck. Is that correct?

5 MR. SCHLUCK: Good evening. As
6 he said, my name is Joe Schluck, I represent
7 myself.

8 As a couple of gentlemen prior to
9 me had pointed out, I sat last night after I
10 got a telephone call from the school district,
11 allowing me the knowledge that this meeting was
12 going to take place, so I sat on the iPad for
13 two hours trying to go through a couple of
14 hundred pages worth of information which
15 seemingly repeated itself over and over again.

16 One of the things I guess that
17 concerns me is the continuation of meeting
18 Wilmington student needs. It says nothing in
19 here about existing students in Red Clay or
20 other students outside of the Wilmington
21 boundaries. That, I don't understand, nor do I
22 agree with whatsoever.

23 I also have a pretty tough time
24 trying to piece together where, you know, all



1 these additional resources that come into Red
2 Clay are going to benefit my son or my
3 daughter. I don't have a problem speaking
4 English. There's other programs which, yes,
5 there are needs for. Not the majority of Red
6 Clay schools. Concentrate those programs of
7 which those individuals in those areas need.
8 Don't water it down.

9 Again, I wish I was more prepared
10 for such a meeting and to have all the
11 information to refer to. But it also comes
12 down to the simple fact that I moved to the Red
13 Clay School District with a young child because
14 of the district itself. I didn't want to move
15 to an area, you know, with nicer houses, a
16 little bit better, because it was Christina
17 School District. I didn't want to go somewhere
18 that was Colonial, I wanted to go to Red Clay
19 because of the, all the things going on
20 positive within Red Clay School District. This
21 will inevitably change that fact. Thank you.

22 DR. PIKA: Thank you,
23 Mr. Schluck.

24 Robert Cathell.



1 MR. CATHELL: My name is Robert
2 Cathell, I'm speaking on behalf of myself.

3 I came to the first meeting of
4 this committee a couple of months ago, I sat
5 and listened. I came last week to William
6 Penn. I found a couple of stats based on 2013.
7 The funding that's put in place in the school
8 district in Delaware, the average funding for
9 students is \$13,800. That's on comparison with
10 Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. We
11 spend, where we're ranked 11th in the nation
12 for funding, but our SAT scores for students
13 that graduate are in the bottom ten percent of
14 the country. I'm definitely opposed to this.
15 You have plenty of funding, it's how it's
16 allocated. Why don't we get more for our
17 money? What's the failure? Something is
18 broken in the school system. No amount of
19 money is going to change it. If it's
20 socioeconomic, something going on in the house,
21 that belongs to social services. The school
22 district is not in the business of taking care
23 of the mental health aspects of these kids,
24 providing for them. Where are the parents at?



1 The funding is there. I don't think it's fair
2 that you penalize the entire state by
3 reassessing the properties, because that's what
4 they want to do. You're going to penalize
5 every retiree, you penalize every homeowner,
6 property owner. You want it to be equitable?
7 Implement a sales tax. Everybody has got skin
8 in the game. You want something to change?
9 Raise the sales tax. I don't appreciate the
10 fact that you want to take away my right to
11 vote on a referendum. That's the check and
12 balance to keep spending intact, in place. I
13 have a say. That's what you want to take away
14 from me. I disagree. Thank you.

15 DR. PIKA: Thank you,
16 Mr. Cathell.

17 Any other people who wish to
18 speak?

19 Robert Sullivan.

20 MR. SULLIVAN: Hello. My name is
21 Robert Sullivan, and I'm here representing
22 myself. I am a parent of a kindergartner here
23 at Brandywine Springs. We were lucky enough to
24 choose him in here. We live in Woodcrest. And



1 we just had some neighbors, everybody was
2 raving how great Brandywine Springs was, and we
3 could not be happier. We love his teacher, and
4 we just are every day so happy that we're in
5 this school here.

6 And like some of you, I didn't
7 know a lot about this. I see the WDEL
8 microphone, I listen to WDEL on the way home
9 from work most days. I didn't hear about this
10 meeting tonight. We got the robocall last
11 night. My wife and I got on the computer, we
12 started Googling. Most of the articles were
13 from over the summer, and then we saw -- we
14 read most of the report.

15 And the first thing that came to
16 our mind was this plan is to go into effect the
17 year my son's younger brother is set to start
18 school. And not only do we want both our
19 children going to the same school, we want them
20 going to this school. And how is absorbing all
21 of Wilmington's -- Christina School District in
22 Wilmington going to affect choicing? I know
23 we're not having questions tonight, but these
24 are things I and I think a lot of other parents



1 would like answered when you put your reports
2 together.

3 The second thing that we are kind
4 of scratching our heads, and I'm certainly
5 going to investigate some more, is the school
6 district voted, so it was unanimous for the Red
7 Clay School District to absorb all of Christina
8 School District in Wilmington, unanimous or
9 nearly unanimous for Christina to give it up,
10 and unanimous for Brandywine's district to
11 remain unchanged. And I thought that was -- I
12 heard some of you express similar concern about
13 that, as well.

14 So thank you for allowing me the
15 opportunity to speak. That's all I have.

16 DR. PIKA: Thank you,
17 Mr. Sullivan.

18 There was also a Christina S.
19 underneath.

20 MS. SQUILLACE: Hi, my name is
21 Christine Squillace. I didn't write it down on
22 the paper because a lot of people butcher it,
23 so that's why I just put S.

24 I'm here representing myself, but



1 also probably am the youngest parent speaking.
2 I have -- my daughter is in kindergarten at
3 Brandywine Springs, and I got the call, just
4 like I think one other person said that they
5 did, about the meeting tonight. It was the
6 first thing I actually heard about the
7 redistricting.

8 So I pulled up the PDF file, came
9 up on my computer as 191 pages. So I'm sitting
10 there and I'm reading through it, and they have
11 all these things highlighted, so I read all
12 that. And it was really, really repetitive.
13 But the other thing I kind of thought about is
14 if you are redistricting Christina School
15 District to Red Clay, I feel like you're not
16 actually fixing the problem. If there's a
17 problem with the inner city being, one part
18 that they put was it's blacks, Latinos, and
19 low-income housing, well, you're not actually,
20 again, fixing the issues. If there's an issue
21 with the low income, poverty-stricken community
22 of inner city, what aren't you -- first of all,
23 I don't feel like you're telling us something,
24 but you're not actually fixing any of the other



1 issues besides pushing it off on Red Clay.

2 So I'm worried about
3 overcrowding, I'm worried what the choicing is
4 going to be like. I'm just worried about the
5 future for Red Clay. Why isn't Brandywine
6 contributing to this, and what's going to
7 happen to Christina School District after
8 everybody leaves? What are the test scores
9 going to be like? How are the children all
10 going to mesh together? How is it going to
11 be -- how is it going to affect all the
12 children?

13 If you have kids that come from,
14 you know, a house that's a broken home, I come
15 from a broken home, unfortunately; I didn't
16 have the public school experience when I was
17 younger. I did when I was in high school, I
18 went to McKean, I graduated in 2009. And I can
19 tell you I went to Catholic school and then I
20 went to a military school. And just coming
21 from that to a public school, just seeing how
22 one of the schools closed and Dickinson and
23 McKean took a lot of inner-city kids, teachers
24 were getting flipped over tables, cops were



1 coming through the front doors. You name it,
2 it happened. People were getting their hair
3 ripped out. It was awful. Teachers can't be
4 teachers. You're going to have more teachers
5 that don't want to teach anymore. You can't
6 discipline the kids, you can't actually do
7 anything about anything that goes on in the
8 classroom.

9 So what's the new discipline
10 action that you wrote? In the 191 pages, you
11 said there was going to be new disciplinary
12 rules, that the funding wasn't going to come
13 from the taxpayers' dollars. And me being a
14 young mom kind of sucks if you're going to end
15 up taxing me more for things that I already pay
16 for. We have services for low-income housing,
17 which is great. We have things that, you know,
18 for kids, Boys & Girls Club.

19 I just want to know how this is
20 going to be long-term. And if it's going to
21 affect my kids, how is that going to affect the
22 schools, the property taxes, and just, I feel
23 like you need to reform that. Thank you.

24 DR. PIKA: Thank you.



1 Valerie J.

2 MS. JERMUSYK: My name is Valerie
3 Jermusyk. I'm here representing myself, but I
4 also work at the United Way of Delaware. And
5 I've known about this report, I knew about it
6 before I started working at United Way of
7 Delaware. I've worked at Girls Inc., I've
8 worked at a number of non-profit organizations.

9 One of the projects that I work
10 on is a mentoring program, and we chose the
11 project to help H.B. DuPont School with an
12 activity hour. And it was designed to connect
13 the students that live in the city, in 19805,
14 around Little Italy, to the school. See, the
15 parents don't have transportation to get out to
16 H.B. DuPont for parent-teacher meetings, so
17 those are the bad kids. There's no public bus
18 system out there. You can't get there. So we
19 brought orientation to the families and to the
20 kids, and we brought it in English and Spanish,
21 and I'm proud of that. I'm proud I was able to
22 go door to door through that neighborhood and
23 provide those families with a little bit of
24 hope that the school cared about what their



1 children were doing that year. Those kids got
2 to see their courses before anybody else did.
3 They felt special. Finally, they felt special.

4 I have a house here in Thomas
5 Pointe. We downsized. Our five girls have all
6 grown and gone. Four went to -- well, they all
7 five were in Red Clay. Our extra daughter went
8 to Dickinson. My main four daughters, two went
9 to McKean, probably would have graduated with
10 the young woman who just spoke. Two of my
11 other daughters graduated from Cab Calloway.
12 We were certainly honored to have them attend
13 that school.

14 I can tell you that my youngest
15 had the best education, because she went to
16 A.I. DuPont Middle School, and that was the
17 most challenging school. 60 percent poverty
18 rate while she was going there. But when she
19 left, she had a broader, more amazing
20 experience in education from the different
21 types of people she got to go to school with.

22 So I can tell you the advantage
23 that's going to happen by your children being
24 mixed with these other children, they will be



1 amazing global citizens. They will be
2 productive members of society, they will
3 benefit. The kids in the city will benefit,
4 and heaven forbid, the kids in the city will
5 actually go to a prom because it's going to be
6 near their house. They're not going to be
7 bussed out or not able to attend simple, normal
8 activities that are part of the school
9 experience. They're actually going to get to
10 do things in their own neighborhood with their
11 own friends instead of sitting on the bus for
12 two hours and not being able to eat. Thank you
13 very much.

14 DR. PIKA: Once again, we're at
15 that point where no one has signed up. If
16 there's anyone else here in the room who would
17 like to make a statement, there's sign-up
18 sheets in the back of the room.

19 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Can you speak
20 again?

21 DR. PIKA: No. We have several
22 legal advisors in the group, and they say no,
23 but you are welcome to submit additional
24 written information.



1 Anyone else? It's a little like
2 a Quaker meeting, I guess, waiting for someone
3 to stand.

4 What we will do then is to
5 suspend the hearing for about 15 minutes, 20
6 minutes, and then see if anyone else arrives
7 late or if any of you change your minds and you
8 decide you would like to make a statement. And
9 we will then come back into session, at which
10 time we have the opportunity to do that, or
11 late arrivals would have the opportunity to do
12 that.

13 But at this point, then, I will
14 suspend the hearing. You can all mingle, talk
15 with each other if you'd like for a while, or
16 you're welcome to go home, as well; it's up to
17 you. Thank you very much for coming, however,
18 this evening.

19 (A brief recess was taken.)

20 DR. PIKA: I'd like to call this
21 hearing back into session, please. If the
22 public hearing can come back into session,
23 please, we have one more speaker, unless
24 someone else may have signed up during the



1 intermission -- no. And that speaker is
2 Gretchen Shahan.

3 MS. SHAHAN: Good evening. My
4 name is Gretchen Shahan; I'm speaking on behalf
5 of myself.

6 I just want to say I'm here from
7 Red Clay, and if we can't get it right for all
8 of the children that we currently serve here in
9 Red Clay School District, then what confidence
10 will I or other Red Clay residents have that
11 we'll be able to handle the future students
12 from this WEIC program?

13 Thank you; that's it.

14 DR. PIKA: Thank you, Ms. Shahan.

15 We are staying in session until
16 8:00 p.m., so if there are others that would
17 like to speak at this point, you may sign up to
18 do so, anyone else in the room may have entered
19 late or had a change of heart during the break.

20 And our next speaker is Kira
21 McDonnell.

22 MS. McDONNELL: Hi, I'm totally
23 unprepared to speak, and a little nervous. But
24 here's the thing. Delaware schools, I think we



1 all know, are interesting, to say the least. I
2 think the gentleman over there said screwed up
3 or something to that effect, and I agree.

4 What I would like to see instead
5 of just another Band-Aid is to start from
6 scratch. Let's bring schools back to the
7 community where they are located, and let's
8 bring the kids to their community schools.
9 What's happening now with all of the busing and
10 kids driving, they're spending hours a day on a
11 bus, when if we take the schools in Wilmington
12 and make them better, it will benefit
13 everybody.

14 We're taking resources -- we're
15 adding resources to schools like Brandywine
16 Springs unnecessarily. If you have a community
17 school, you have the resources that you need.
18 See, I was totally not prepared. This is why I
19 shouldn't have done this.

20 I just feel like this is another
21 Band-Aid. And we need to start from scratch.
22 I worked very, very hard to get the referendum
23 passed, and I'm proud of that. But now I'm
24 questioning the work I did on that when all of



1 this is coming to fruition and there's no vote,
2 that this is just going to be given to us. Do
3 I think that our students need more money?

4 Yes. Do I think that -- you know, it should be
5 equitable across the State of Delaware. You
6 know, why is Red Clay bearing the burden of all
7 these additional students when Christina
8 couldn't? It's just a Band-Aid solution to put
9 the burden on Red Clay residents, and what
10 benefit are the Red Clay students, where every
11 issue that comes up, everything that we're
12 doing, you know, the students are getting lost
13 in this.

14 I think we need to just take the
15 school, bring the communities back to the
16 schools, to their local schools. Fix the
17 problems in the city. I'm all about diversity,
18 and I love what that woman said from the United
19 Way in that she brought the orientation to
20 Wilmington so that parents could be there. The
21 parents shouldn't have to have the orientation
22 brought to them; the parents should be able to
23 get to their schools.

24 And what we need to do is take



1 this money, fix the schools in Wilmington,
2 develop a Wilmington school district, and fill
3 those schools. And then that way the parents
4 can be involved, the community can be involved,
5 and, you know, Red Clay, the resources that
6 we're spending for kids that are causing issues
7 in Red Clay schools, we can take that money and
8 put it in the schools that need the resources.
9 We're spending money for things that we don't
10 necessarily need in all the schools.

11 I'll be more clear next time.

12 DR. PIKA: Thank you,
13 Ms. McDonnell.

14 Any other speakers? Anyone else
15 who wishes to go on the record at this public
16 hearing? We have time. We are patient.

17 See, you stay in business long
18 enough. Vince Jenkins is our next speaker.

19 MR. JENKINS: Hello, my name is
20 Vince Jenkins. I'm here speaking on behalf of
21 myself.

22 I didn't know anything about this
23 meeting until today. I came to this meeting
24 for a completely different reason. After



1 listening to the parents and the concerned
2 people, the argument, I somewhat agree with
3 them. I live in Wilmington and my kids go to
4 school in Wilmington. I have an older son who
5 went to school in Red Clay, and it was
6 completely different. Red Clay was awesome.
7 And when I go into the Wilmington schools now,
8 I'm afraid for my kids. I walk my kids to
9 class. And I think that if some of these kids
10 come up here, your house, your property value
11 would go down, and people would not look at Red
12 Clay the way they're looking at Red Clay right
13 now.

14 I thought Red Clay was the best
15 school district in Delaware. Some of these
16 kids in Wilmington, you don't really want them
17 to be a part of your school. And I think you
18 all should fight hard to stop this. Thank you.

19 DR. PIKA: Thank you,
20 Mr. Jenkins.

21 Olga Beaver.

22 MS. BEAVER: Good evening. My
23 name is Olga Beaver, and I am here representing
24 myself.



1 I'm actually a teacher in a Title
2 1 school, which means that a lot of our
3 students actually get free or reduced lunch. I
4 read the report, and I actually found out about
5 it from my husband, and I was shocked to find
6 out that I actually did not know anything about
7 it. I went and asked my fellow teachers if
8 they are aware of this, and none of them were
9 actually aware. They were actually a lot of
10 them surprised and tell me that I misread the
11 report. And I said, no, no, no, I'm pretty
12 sure that I read it correctly. And this is
13 where you can find about it.

14 The report, actually, I think it
15 has a very utopian envision for how the school
16 system in Delaware should be implemented,
17 should work. But I think, you know, as a
18 teacher, I want my students to perform the
19 best. And there's a lot of I guess different
20 things that go into student achievement, not
21 necessarily just the school environment, but
22 also their home.

23 I have students who do not come
24 to school, they miss a day of school because



1 maybe they had a shooting. I have other
2 students who do not come to school because they
3 have problems going on at home, and that's very
4 different, difficult as a teacher for you to
5 deal with and actually make them move forward.
6 I want this generation to in the future do
7 outstanding. I want my students to be the
8 best. I want my students to get a good job, to
9 be well-educated.

10 But the fact of the matter is
11 that you cannot get there unless you have the
12 proper allocation of resources to support them.
13 You need teachers. Teachers need support. You
14 need a lot of stuff that currently Red Clay
15 does not even have for their own students.

16 So therefore, how is actually
17 getting a lot more students into Red Clay going
18 to fix a problem that Red Clay currently has?
19 So we just approved taxes for the students to
20 get them better resources so that our low
21 performing schools within Red Clay can get
22 better computers, literacy coaches. And now
23 we're adding more students, and I guess what my
24 skepticism comes from is where is this money



1 going to come from? And in the long run, is it
2 really going to work?

3 Because for you to fix poverty, I
4 want to fix poverty across the world. I want
5 Africa to have better resources than they
6 currently have. And, you know, it's very tough
7 for you to fix that.

8 So I guess that is what I wanted
9 to say from a different point of view. I want
10 the City of Wilmington students to have better
11 options for their future, but without the
12 proper allocation of resources, you can't do
13 that. You can't just say here it is, we want
14 everyone to do well, but yet there's no set
15 plan in place for them. That's all.

16 DR. PIKA: Thank you, Ms. Beaver.

17 It is now 8:00, and unless
18 there's anyone else that has signed up, anyone
19 else in the group?

20 This hearing is now closed. I
21 want to thank all of you for coming and
22 participating this evening. All comments made
23 today are submitted -- between November the
24 17th and December the 8th will be considered as



1 part of the final report submitted by the
2 Wilmington Education Improvement Commission to
3 the State Board of Education. All comments
4 made today or submitted between November the
5 17th and January the 14th will be available for
6 the State Board to consider. Thank you very
7 much.

8 (Hearing adjourned at 8:01 p.m.)
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1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER
2

3 I, Jennifer M. Guy, RPR, do hereby certify
4 that the foregoing record, pages 1 to 55
5 inclusive, is a true and accurate transcript of
6 my stenographic notes taken on December 7,
7 2015, in the above-captioned matter.

8
9 

10 Jennifer M. Guy, RPR
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