



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PO Box 500
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

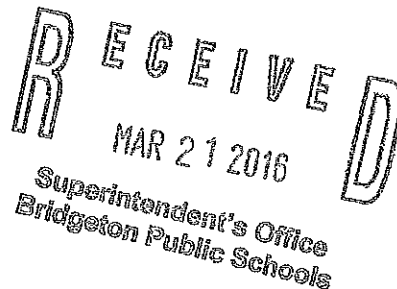
CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

DAVID C. HESPE
Commissioner

March 17, 2016

Ms. Thomasina Jones, Superintendent
Bridgeton Public Schools
41 Bank Street
Bridgeton, NJ 08302



Dear Ms. Jones:

SUBJECT: Bridgeton Public Schools – Board of Education Member’s Actions
OFAC Case #INV-004-16

The Department of Education, Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance (OFAC), received information from the Office of the Attorney General, Division of Criminal Justice, Corruption Bureau (DCJ), by way of the School Ethics Commission (SEC), concerning the actions of Angelia Edwards, President of the Bridgeton Public Schools Board of Education (Board). The SEC shared the information that it received from DCJ because the SEC did not believe it could, absent the filing of a formal Complaint, currently proceed with ethics charges against Ms. Edwards.

The OFAC did not reinvestigate the allegations pertaining to Ms. Edwards and, instead, its investigation was limited to reviewing the investigative reports and findings issued by the DCJ. A summary of the information contained in the DCJ Investigation Report (Report) follows.

Between January 2015 and May 2015, the DCJ investigators interviewed numerous Board employees. As identified in the Report, those employees included: Bob Stevens, former Safety and Security Director; Thomasina Jones, Superintendent; Terrell M. Everett, Human Resources Director; Christine Barlas, former Vice Principal of Geraldyn O. Foster Early Childhood Center; Timothy J. Fleming, Maintenance; Fred Hooverman, Electrician; John Shimp, Maintenance Supervisor; Milton Pierce, Custodian/Grounds Crew; and Louis Levari, HVAC/Plumbing.

The statements made to the DCJ investigators by several Board employees indicate that, during work hours on numerous occasions, different Board employees went to the residence of Ms. Edwards, ostensibly at her request, to perform maintenance work. It appears that, for at least some of these visits, District owned machinery and/or equipment may have been used in connection with the maintenance work performed at Ms. Edwards’ residence. During the course of the DCJ interviews, several people alleged that Ms. Edwards was intimately involved with the Bridgeton Public Schools’ (district) personnel matters, and with the day-to-day operations of the district beyond the scope of her duties as a Board member.

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Because the statements obtained during the DCJ investigation corroborate the fact that, on numerous occasions, several Board employees, by performing maintenance work at Ms. Edwards' residence, engaged in work outside the scope of their duties as Board employees, during the course of business hours, and with district owned machinery and/or equipment, the Board is directed to complete a Corrective Action Plan to address these findings.

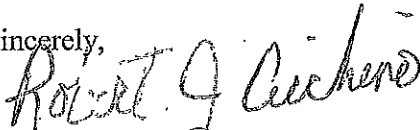
Utilizing the process outlined in the attached "Procedures for LEA/Agency Response, Corrective Action Plan and Appeal Process," the Bridgeton Public Schools Board of Education is required, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.6, to publicly review and discuss the findings in this report at a public board meeting no later than 30 days after receipt of the report. Within 30 days of the public meeting, the Board must adopt a resolution certifying that the findings were discussed in a public meeting, and approving a corrective action plan which addresses the issues raised in the undisputed findings and/or an appeal of any findings in dispute. A copy of the resolution and the approved corrective action plan and/or appeal must be sent to this office within 10 days of adoption by the board.

Also, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.6(c), you must post the findings of the report and the Board's corrective action plan on the district's website.

Finally, although the DCJ opted not to prosecute the matter criminally, the actions of Ms. Edwards, as described by multiple Board employees in the Report, could constitute violations of the School Ethics Act. A determination of ethical misconduct by a board member can only be rendered by the SEC. Any person may file a complaint petition with the SEC alleging that a school official has violated the School Ethics Act (Act), N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24 et seq. The Act defines "school officials" as board members, charter school trustees, administrators and employees and officers of the New Jersey School Boards Association. A copy of a complaint form, the School Ethics Act and its implementing regulations are available at <http://www.nj.gov/education/legal/>, or you may contact (609) 984-6941 to have this information mailed to you. An original and two copies of the complaint may be sent to: School Ethics Commission, New Jersey State Department of Education, PO Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-500.

Please provide a copy of this report to each board member and direct your response to my attention. Should you have any questions, please contact Thomas C. Martin, Manager, Investigations Unit, at (609) 633-9615.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Cicchino, Director
Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance

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Attachment

c: Robert Bumpus
Michael Yaple
Thomas C. Martin
Peggy Nicolosi