

Key Findings from The Chester Board of Education’s review of the Feasibility Study prepared by Ross Haber Associates and the issue of dissolution of the WMRHSD

- According to the study, page 96, if **Per Pupil Funding** is utilized, taxes in both Chester Township and Chester Borough will increase. Taxes in Mendham Borough and Mendham Township would decrease. Therefore, the Per Pupil Funding formula supported by the Chester Township Mayor Elect would not be financially beneficial to the residents of Chester Township or Chester Borough
- **The financial analysis and, therefore its conclusions, is suspect.** The conclusions are founded on a one-year projection based on budget, instead of the five-years which is standard in the industry and certified audited financials. In its projections, it incorrectly allocated debt service equally between the two schools, which would not be the case, and arbitrarily projected an increase when information available at the time reflect a decrease. It misallocated \$9million in costs that could not be allocated to a specific school and specifically noted, page 9, that there would be additional costs to both districts. These costs were not quantified, but include, at a minimum, additional supervisors, shared teaching staff reductions, and increases in teacher time in classroom (from 6th period pay differentials). These items among others cause significant concern in the accuracy of the overall projected cost savings.
- Feasibility study did not investigate the **educational impact** on any of the K-8 districts or the potential for negative impact at the high school level. It only considered “educational opportunities”. We therefore could not evaluate Option 1 vs Option 2 in regards to educational impact. We have concerns over the lack of consideration a dissolution, with associated change of administration, staff, and board of education may have.
- The report did not outline the potential impact of the significant decline in enrollment.
- **No one can guarantee that existing staff will remain in current roles**, at current schools. Tenured staff will be ranked by seniority, then request placement at either Central HS or Mendham HS. Terms and conditions of employment from WMRHSD are only in place until new contract negotiated with new school district.
- **Per pupil expenditures** (Principal’s Budget) at Mendham HS and Central HS are **equal**. This excludes salaries and benefits, transportation, special education and plant maintenance.
- **Teacher/Student Ratios** are equivalent at both schools.
- There is no clear plan for how any potential savings would be distributed in new Chester/Mendham High School (**tax relief vs. enhancements** to Mendham HS) or for how a new school district will be funded.
- **Racial Composition** has not been recorded and analyzed, a requirement to be included with the request to the Executive County Superintendent to investigate dissolution.

HR 12/13/16