

Lower Township Will Fund Own Study on School Withdrawal

VILLAS – Lower Township will conduct its own feasibility study on the effects of Cape May withdrawing from the Lower Cape May Regional School District or dissolution of the district.

Members of the governing bodies and boards of education of Lower Township, Cape May and West Cape May met with Interim Executive County Superintendent of Schools Richard Stepura July 22.

The meeting was called after Cape May requested an investigation as to the advisability of withdrawal from the Lower Cape May Regional School District or dissolution of the regional school district.

The meeting was held to discuss the framework in which the issue would be examined.

Following the meeting, Lower Township Mayor Michael Beck said the township will prepare its own feasibility study to counter Cape May's study.

Lower Township has until Dec. 16 to submit its study. Lower Township would hire special counsel to prepare a feasibility study pending township council approval, said the mayor.

"We will mount a vigorous defense," said Beck. "What we are really talking about is the future of our children."

He said the township must spend money for the study.

"We'd rather use the money to fill potholes but we are going to have to do it in order to make sure that our school system remains intact."

The mayor said the process was likely to be lengthy.

"We recognize the regional implications of our school," he said. "Without that school, the City of Cape May does not exist."

The Executive County Superintendent of Schools has 60 days following the submission of the last feasibility study, said Beck.

Lower Cape May Regional Board of Education may conduct its own study of the implications of a withdrawal of Cape May from the district or dissolution.

School Board President Richard Hooyman said he would ask the board to authorize a letter to the state Commissioner of Education asking for an extension of time to accommodate a feasibility study. He said the board would need time to issue a request for proposals for preparation of the study.

Hooyman said he was concerned the board of education started its new fiscal year July 1 and had not reserved money for an attorney to prepare a feasibility study that could cost up to \$50,000.