



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

TAHESHA L. WAY
Lt. Governor

KEVIN DEHMER
Commissioner

June 6, 2025

VIA EMAIL

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Dear Parties:

On July 30, 2024, the Borough of Sea Bright (“Sea Bright”) and the Borough of Highlands (“Highlands”) submitted an Amended Petition seeking approval from the Commissioner for Sea Bright to withdrawal from the Shore Regional School District (“Shore Regional”) and the Oceanport Borough School District (“Oceanport”), contingent upon Sea Bright joining the Henry Hudson Regional School District (“Henry Hudson”) as a constituent municipality. For the following reasons, and in consultation with the Monmouth County Office of Education, Sea Bright’s Amended Petition is conditionally granted.

As a brief overview of the extensive procedural history in this matter, on July 21, 2023, the Acting Commissioner of Education approved the amended request for Atlantic Highlands and Highlands to present the question of expanding the regional district to the voters. Shortly thereafter, on September 6, 2023, Sea Bright submitted a request to the Commissioner to withdraw from Oceanport and Shore Regional and join the newly expanded regional district. The Acting Commissioner issued a decision on September 22, 2023, determining that, although Sea Bright has standing to seek withdrawal from Oceanport and Shore Regional, the request to join Henry Hudson was premature as the expanded all-purpose district had not yet formed¹. As such, Sea Bright was invited to file a new request to enlarge the regional district if and when the referendum to expand Henry Hudson was successful.

¹ The New Jersey Superior Court, Appellate Division, upheld the Commissioner’s September 22, 2023, decision that Sea Bright had standing to file a petition for withdrawal. In re I/M/O the Verified Petition for the Proposed Creation of a PK-12 All-Purpose Reg’l School Dist. By the Borough of Sea Bright, 480 N.J. Super. 270, 295 (App. Div. 2024). Subsequently, on May 30, 2025, the New Jersey Supreme Court issued an order granting petition for certification of the Appellate Division’s decision.

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On September 26, 2023, the registered voters of Atlantic Highlands and Highlands approved the referendum to form a new expanded all-purpose regional school district, now known as Henry Hudson. The expansion of Henry Hudson was completed as of July 1, 2024. As the regional district is now formed, Sea Bright's instant application is ripe for consideration.

On October 2, 2024, the Monmouth County Executive County Superintendent invited all constituent districts to submit responses to Sea Bright's Amended Petition. In accordance therewith, the Monmouth County Office of Education had the opportunity to review all submissions and completed the review of the Amended Petition on March 28, 2025².

Based upon my review, and the recommendation of the Monmouth County Office of Education, Sea Bright's request to withdraw from Shore Regional and Oceanport has met the statutory criteria for withdrawal, contingent upon a satisfactory showing of the following: (1) the presentation of an agreement between Sea Bright and Henry Hudson with regard to Sea Bright joining Henry Hudson as a constituent municipality; and (2) Sea Bright and Henry Hudson passing resolutions memorializing their agreement that Sea Bright may join Henry Hudson as a constituent municipality.

In order for Sea Bright to proceed with a withdrawal from Oceanport and Shore Regional through a referendum, Henry Hudson must agree to accept Sea Bright as a constituent municipality. In the absence of such an agreement, Sea Bright would have no district or schools for its students to attend. Therefore, before this issue is brought before the voters, an agreement between Sea Bright and Henry Hudson must be presented to the Monmouth County Office of Education.

Accordingly, Sea Bright's request to withdraw from Oceanport and Shore Regional is **conditionally granted**, specifically contingent upon Sea Bright and Henry Hudson resolving any outstanding issues with respect to the tax apportionment and that they both pass resolutions memorializing the terms of their agreement. If such an agreement is reached and memorialized, the proposal for Sea Bright to expand Henry Hudson per the terms of the agreement can be presented to the voters.

Sincerely,



Kevin Dehmer
Commissioner

KD/SP/gb

c: Ambrose Duckett, Assistant Commissioner, Field Services
Lester Richens, Monmouth County Executive County Superintendent

² Opposition was filed by the Borough of Monmouth Beach, a constituent district of Shore Regional, on May 1, 2025. As this correspondence was received after the timelines set forth by the Executive County Superintendent in his October 2, 2024, letter, and after his review of the Amended Petition was completed, it was not considered as part of this decision.