East Brunswick Public Schools

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November 10, 2026

VIA E-MAIL (rob@eysoneb.com)
Robert Wilson

SUBJECT: **OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS ACT (OPRA) REQUEST**

Dear Mr. Wilson:

The East Brunswick Public Schools ("District") records custodian received your Open Public Records Act ("OPRA") request submitted on October 20, 2026 and October 21, 2026 (duplicate request).

Your OPRA request seeks the following:

> *Records of the October 13, 2026 meeting between Board of Education and Township leadership.*

The District conducted a good-faith search and identified 4 pages of enclosed records as responsive.

Yours truly,

Joseph Crotchfelt

Joseph Crotchfelt, CPA, QPA
School Business Administrator/Board Secretary

Enclosure

C: Matthew Giacobbe, Esq., Board Attorney

JOSEPH CROTCHFELT

From: MTEB9
Sent: Friday, November 6, 2026 6:42 PM
To: JOSEPH CROTCHFELT
Cc: EVELYN MAMMAN; WPEB9
Subject: Re: Meeting Summary BOE-Township 10/13/2026

Hi Joe,

Sorry I realized I copy pasted Dana's title from my own and forget to fix. See correction below.

Thanks

Dr. Marianne Tanious
President, East Brunswick Board of Education

From: MTEB9 <MTEB9@ebnet.org>
Sent: Friday, November 6, 2026 12:57 PM
To: JOSEPH CROTCHFELT <JCROTCHFELT@ebnet.org>
Cc: EVELYN MAMMAN <EVELYN.MAMMAN@ebnet.org>; WPEB9 <WPEB9@ebnet.org>
Subject: Meeting Summary BOE-Township 10/13/2026

Hi Joe,

Please find below the summary from the township meeting on 10/13/2026. Wilbur, please add anything I missed. I had verbally shared these details with the board members individually the same day of the meeting.

I will add that, following last week's BOE meeting, the Mayor contacted Wilbur, and the Town Council President contacted me. The Mayor asked us to put together a joint press release stating that we would meet to discuss PILOTs. We respectfully declined and indicated that we would be open to a press release once we had reached a robust PILOT agreement with the Township, if that is the goal; any such agreement would require a full board vote, not just leadership, so it could not be until the next scheduled board meeting.
The Township canceled the 11/2 meeting due to illness, and it has been postponed to 11/9.

East Brunswick Township-Board of Education Meeting Summary
October 13, 2026 | Internal meeting notes
Participants in Attendance:
Marianne Tanious, President, East Brunswick Board of Education
Wilbur Pan, Vice-President, East Brunswick Board of Education
Brad Cohen, Mayor
Dana Zimbicki, Town Council President

The meeting began with us asking what happened the prior day when the Mayor and Town Council President made inappropriate comments toward the Board of Education, including stating that we budget like "drunken sailors." In a forceful tone, the Mayor demanded that we "stop talking about the PILOTs and stay out of the election." I clarified that the BOE had not been involved in the election and pointed out the irony of his demand, given that he

had been actively hosting meet-and-greets for a specific BOE candidate, despite having been made aware of threatening statements that candidate had directed toward me.
This information appeared to be news to the Council President. I explained the circumstances surrounding the incident, including the statements I had interpreted as threatening and the racist and xenophobic remarks attributed to HJZ. I further explained that the Board attorney had contacted the Mayor the day after the incident to address these concerns. Despite being informed, the Mayor appeared to dismiss the seriousness of the allegations, apparently did not share the information with the Council President, and subsequently hosted a meet-and-greet for the candidate at his home.
The Mayor then asked whether we had been communicating with the Township Council challengers. We clarified that we had not. I also expressed serious concern that he was attempting to dictate or influence whom we could communicate with or support in our individual capacities as private citizens, while openly exercising his own right to support a particular BOE candidate.
I emphasized that Board members do not surrender their individual rights as private citizens simply because they hold public office. I found it particularly troubling that the Mayor was demanding political neutrality from us while publicly engaging in the very political activity he was criticizing.
I made it clear that I viewed his demands as an inappropriate attempt to interfere with our individual rights and independence, and that I personally found his conduct intimidating, particularly in light of the prior threats and the circumstances surrounding them.

The Town Council President indicated that her comments at the previous night's Town Council meeting had not been directed at the BOE, but at the Town Council challengers.

The Council President questioned why myself and the Board VP had been attending Town Council Meetings recently, and the VP replied that we had heard that there were more apartments coming to the mall and we realized it was good practice to be in attendance so we were aware of how we can plan accordingly. I reminded the Council President that she is almost at every BOE meeting and we have never taken issue with that, and told the Mayor he had also attended our BOE meetings on occasion which we never took issue with either.

1. Regarding PILOT Agreements, Students, and Public Revenue

- The Mayor initially identified three PILOT developments and appeared unaware that Summerhill Gardens was also a PILOT development. I told him this is what is on the state website, and advised he should contact the state if that is incorrect.
- We explained that PILOT developments may add students who must be educated even where the district does not receive corresponding property-tax revenue.
- Emphasized that the BOE is not opposed to PILOTs; the concern is funding the resulting educational needs.
- The Mayor questioned the need for roughly $20,000 per additional student because an additional enrollment does not automatically require another teacher. Explained that this is an average per-pupil cost, while individual enrollment also affects capacity and overall district resources.
- The Mayor asked why PILOT funding questions were arising now and whether they were coming from council candidates. We clarified that the questions were not coming directly from council candidates; candidates may have raised the issue while door-knocking, prompting other community members to ask questions.
- BOE VP shared that he had actually been receiving questions on PILOTs since his own election in 2024.
- Explained that I came across an article reporting that Jersey City allocated 10% of its PILOT funds to its schools. Continued researching and found other school districts and municipalities with similar arrangements.
- Explained that we had never questioned PILOTs because we had previously relied on the Mayor's characterization at every town hall meeting that PILOT funds could only support projects benefiting the entire municipality. The mayor stated that, before we brought it up at a recent BOE meeting, he was not aware that PILOTs could be used for school capital or operational budgets. I said that he had said it so often and with such confidence, and given his position, I did not think there had been reason to question it.

I indicated that it was a lesson learned for me and that I would verify all information for myself moving forward, regardless of the source.

- The Jersey City figure and other examples were described as findings from my research, not independently verified conclusions in these notes.
- I suggested that the Mayor contact the Mayor of Cedar Grove to discuss that municipality's approach to PILOT arrangements and school-related funding, perhaps to offer more guidance, since he indicated this was new for him.
- The town council president stated that they were not receiving available funds, and explained that funds already received were needed for Township surplus and bond-rating considerations. BOE VP stated that they did not have to wait till the funds were received to establish an agreement with the schools to allocate those funds.
- I emphasized that directing public revenue toward education should not be framed as the Township "helping" the Board or doing it a favor: these are taxpayer funds, not the personal funds of either governing body.

2. Special Education Data and District Capacity

- The Mayor had made statements at a town council meeting that he had been requesting special education data for three years, specifically around how many of those students just needed extra time on a test vs. needing additional aides in a classroom, etc. I told him that the VP, me, the superintendent, and several other BOE members had never received such a request from him. He clarified that he made a request three years ago but had not renewed it with the current Superintendent or Board. The wording of his public claim suggested an ongoing, unanswered request, rather than a request made three years prior, and gave the impression that we were intentionally unresponsive.
- I explained that extended time on tests can be a Section 504 accommodation and does not, by itself, establish special education eligibility, which I thought he would have understood as a former BOE member himself.
- I explained that all of the data he was requesting is on the state website and the school district provides that on an annual basis, which again, I stated he should have known as a former board member. The Mayor said he did not know how to read or disaggregate the published data and requested a meeting to walk through it. I stated I would be happy to show him how to do so at a later meeting.
- His comments at that previous town council meeting have also indicated that our enrollment was down and we should not be at capacity. I explained that even if total enrollment is stable or declining, rising special education enrollment changes facilities and staffing requirements. Used autism classrooms with small program capacities, sometimes approximately six students, as an example; Town Council President noted that some classrooms serve more students. I said I was glad she knew this as an educator, and I wish she would correct the comments from the dais immediately instead of leaving the perception that the BOE is misleading anyone.
- I reiterated the district's prior out-of-district placement levels and that placements are increasing again due to resource and program-capacity limitations.
- I also asked why the Township wanted the special education data, as it was well beyond the scope of the Township and within the remit of the BOE. The Mayor said he wished to use it to seek legislative assistance. I responded that effective advocacy requires first recognizing the district's challenges, not denying they exist. I also reminded him that we are elected officials, and while we appreciate help seeking legislative assistance, this is also within our responsibilities.
- I recounted a prior Daisy breakfast conversation with two Assembly members in which the Township's Economic Development Officer reportedly challenged the district's funding concerns and said the Board did not budget properly. Explained that such statements undermine requests for legislative assistance.
- The Mayor suggested the district should not advertise its special education programming. Explained that the district does not do so, but families share experiences and information across the state; the Town Council President agreed and said this cannot be controlled, as parents and communities of special education students speak to one another. I expressed appreciation for her indicating that.

3. Council Candidates and Board Meeting Attendance

- The Mayor appeared to believe council candidates had been invited to a Board meeting. I stated that I found that statement inappropriate, asked whether those candidates attended Township meetings by invitation as well, and clarified that the Board had not invited them. It is a public meeting, and no one needs to be invited.
- Explained that the Board would not treat public attendees of a BOE meeting rudely: candidates are also constituents. Grievances between the Mayor and candidates should not be transferred to the Board.

4. Public Remarks and Leadership

- The Mayor said his remarks at the previous evening's council meeting reflected how he had been feeling about the Town Council challengers.
- I expressed concern that airing grievances publicly was not constructive leadership and could create the impression of problems between the governing bodies that may not actually exist.
- Reminded the mayor that we had been having ad hoc discussions and had always had a professional relationship until he decided to put his full support behind a certain BOE candidate when it became evident we were not on the same page about supporting this candidate.
- The BOE encouraged direct conversation instead of public exchanges.

5. Historical Grievances and Assumptions About Board Members

- The Mayor expressed difficulty separating experiences with Boards over the past ten years from his relationship with the current Board. Explained that asking current members to carry the "sins of previous Boards" was unfair; the present Board should be evaluated on its own actions.
- The Mayor said he believed several Board members had higher political ambitions. I responded that no member had discussed such ambitions with me, so I could not speak for them. I reminded the mayor that he and one other Councilman were formerly BOE members, so I was unsure why he felt it was permissible for them and not others. I added that even if current BOE members aspire to other offices, that is their business as long as they do their current jobs well. Strong, effective Board members pursuing further public service would be welcome if that is what they choose.
- He indicated that after serving on the BOE for a long time he felt that things had been in good shape and he wanted to offer that same help to the town, but he did not think the BOE was in the same good shape he had left it in so he wasn't sure why anyone would be pursuing anything else. I reiterated that no one had that conversation with me so I could not confirm his statements.

6. Gate Discussion

- The gate was discussed. Reminded the mayor that 9 people were in that meeting, and we had all agreed to a joint statement from the BOE and township to let the community know the gate would be open in the morning and afternoon. Mayor states he does not recall that and only remembers us mentioning it being open for dismissal.
- Rediscussed that the purpose in opening the gate was to do what was in the best interest of our students upon arrival and dismissal, and I was not comfortable discussing the gate at that time, considering this had been touching on the gray areas leading up to the gate discussion, including the Town Council President's dual role.
- Reminded the Mayor and Town Council President that the gate was BOE property and well within the school board's right to open, and any such decision will be reached by the school district if they feel it's in the best interest of our students.

Thank you,

Dr. Marianne Tanious
President, East Brunswick Board of Education