



**MOUNT OLIVE TOWNSHIP
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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Board President Statement from 2/27/23 Board Meeting

As members of the community may be aware from an article that recently appeared in the *Mount Olive Chronicle*, Board of Education member Lisa Narcise wrote a letter to the New Jersey Department of Education's Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance on February 19, 2023 asking it to appoint a State Monitor in our district because she alleges that there are ongoing improprieties related to governance, finance and personnel. This letter came as a complete shock and surprise to members of the Board and Administration, who were unaware it was sent until we received an Open Public Records Act request from the local newspaper. How the newspaper was aware of the letter before the Board had any knowledge of its existence is still an open question, but we certainly have our suspicions.

Ms. Narcise's letter makes numerous unfounded and unsubstantiated allegations against the Board, Administration and our attorney. Just so the community is aware, the appointment of a State monitor is a drastic measure which results in a State official essentially running the entire school district, rather than the Administration and its elected officials.

Despite Ms. Narcise's claims, I wish to assure everyone that our District is on very solid footing and we most certainly ***do not*** need a State official running our District. To illustrate this point, Mt. Olive just underwent our Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) monitoring by the Department of Education. We have been assured by the Department that we will pass all five components of the State audit which are: (1) Instruction & Program, (2) Fiscal Management, (3) Governance (4) Operations, and (5) Personnel. In fact, on February 17th our Acting Superintendent, Dr. Bangia, was asked to present Mount Olive's accomplishments at the County Superintendent Roundtable meeting which was attended by the Acting Commissioner of Education and her Chief of staff. The Mount Olive School District and Dr. Bangia received high praise at that meeting for our work.

Ms. Narcise's letter goes on to claim that the October, 2022 actions regarding our current Superintendent were taken unilaterally by one Board member. However, this is completely untrue. It was a full board decision which included Ms. Narcise. I am constrained by what I can say about the matter, but suffice it to say that a Superior Court Judge in Morris County concluded in December 2022 that the Board did not violate the law in any way. Despite Ms. Narcise claims that our District has been "hijacked by a few board members and administrators obsessed with ruining an individual's career and life", this is also blatantly false.

Nobody on this Board relishes the situation that we find ourselves in right now with our Superintendent, but we had no choice but to address some very serious allegations in a deliberative and lawful manner. For us to have ignored the situation would have been a serious dereliction of our duties and the oath we swore to uphold. It is unfortunate that there are few individuals in the community who are intent on creating a false narrative on social media and not holding everyone to the same high ethical standards.

In fact, Ms. Narcise references that there have been numerous ethics complaints filed against Board members. This is true, but they were filed by three individuals, two of whom then take to social media and Board meetings to complain about the escalating legal fees. We are confident that these cases will be deemed to be unfounded and ultimately dismissed. Unfortunately, it will cost the taxpayers of Mount Olive significant money to litigate— money which would be better spent on the students we are charged with educating, and paying decent wages for aides that we so desperately need. However, despite Ms. Narcise’s claim, the money to fund this litigation will have no impact on the teachers’ health benefits.

It is unfortunate that Ms. Narcise has chosen to address her concerns and complaints directly with the State instead of first discussing them with her fellow board members and the Administration. To me, this is a serious breach of our Code of Ethics which states that Board members are not allowed to take private action that can compromise the Board. In my opinion, this is exactly what she has done.

As I stated before, most if not all of my fellow Board members take strong exception to Ms. Narcise’s false allegations. This has caused many of us to question her true motives and whether her loyalties lie with the students of Mount Olive or other outside influences who are intent on creating division and controversy. I truly hope the community questions this as well.

However, as Board President I wish to assure that Mt. Olive community that this Board of Education is intent on doing the right thing for the taxpayers and our students, who will always be our number one priority!