



The School District of Lee County
Superintendent Nancy J. Graham, Ed.D.
2855 Colonial Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33966

September 8, 2015

RE: Request for Workshop and Presentation on September 22, 2015

Dear Superintendent Graham and members of the Lee County School Board:

To provide the Lee County School Board (“school board”) with information regarding the upcoming redistricting process, the Lee County Branch of the NAACP (“Lee County NAACP”) respectfully requests one hour to present at the school board’s September 22, 2015 workshop and fifteen minutes to present at its regular meeting the same day. We also request to be placed on the regular meeting agenda on September 22nd, so the school board can publicly discuss the topics raised in our workshop and regular meeting presentations.¹

When the school board passed its resolution in 2014 to expand the school board from five to seven members (which was approved by voter referendum in November 2014), the board did not specify the boundaries for the five single-member districts. Under Florida Statute, district boundary lines may be drawn only in odd-numbered years.² Thus, in order for the new districts to take effect in time for the 2016 election, the school board must pass a resolution setting the boundaries by the end of the 2015 calendar year. To assist and collaborate in the redistricting process, the Lee County NAACP will present the school board with information including:

- an overview of traditional and other federal, state, and local redistricting principles;
- opportunities to improve representation for the diverse community of students and parents in Lee County; and
- a proposed map for the five single-member districts.

¹ These requests are made in accordance with School Board Policy 1.11.

² Fla. Stat. § 1001.36(2).

When Lee County voters approved an expansion of the school board from five to seven members in November 2014, Chairwoman Cathleen O’Daniel Morgan told *The News-Press* that she hoped the plan would “bring[] broader representation to the board,” which oversees a public school system in which more than 55 percent of students are minorities.³ The new school board’s expansion to five single-member districts and two at-large seats provides an opportunity to improve representation for students and parents in Lee County, but only if the five single-member districts are drawn to comply with traditional redistricting principles and provide voters an equal opportunity to elect their candidates of choice. To this end, the Lee County NAACP requests that the school board follow up on our presentations by:

1. considering the effects of redistricting on minority students and their families;
2. taking public comment on proposed districts for the new seven-member school board before they go into effect in November 2016; and
3. adopting district lines that improve representation of diverse families in the Lee County public school system.

In support of its mission to improve student achievement, including by “reduc[ing] the gap in achievement between minority and non-minority students,”⁴ the school board has committed to “[e]ncourage and listen for the diversity and the views of all in the community” and to “[g]overn proactively rather than reactively.”⁵ The Lee County NAACP looks forward to working with school board members to achieve these goals, and to improve representation of Lee County’s diverse students and families with the new, seven-member school board. We look forward to receiving confirmation of our requests as described in paragraph 1 of this correspondence as soon as possible; thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

/s/ *James Muwakkil*

James Muwakkil

President, Lee County Branch of the NAACP

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CC: Mary Fischer, District 1 School Board Member
Jeanne S. Dozier, District 2 School Board Member
Cathleen O’Daniel Morgan, District 3 School Board Chairman
Steven K. Teuber, District 4 School Board Vice Chairman
Pamela H. LaRiviere, District 5 School Board Member

³ See Dave Breitenstein, *Lee School Board Will Add Two Members*, *The News-Press*, Nov. 4, 2014, <http://www.news-press.com/story/news/politics/2014/11/04/lee-school-board-will-add-two-members/18508179>.

⁴ School Board Policy 1.03(5)(c).

⁵ School Board Policy 1.06.