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December 23, 2015

To Whom it May Concern:

As the outgoing Interim Superintendent of Schools at the Essex County Vocational-Technical School District I am pleased to be able to offer you my comments concerning the district's work done with the architectural firm of Di Cara-Rubino, located in Wayne, New Jersey. They have been selected to work on two projects for the district. The first is the design of a new county vocational high school scheduled to open in the City of Newark in September 2018. This is an extremely large project through the design, demolition and construction phases, and is further impacted by the closing of two existing district high schools. I was charged with the responsibility of coordinating committee meetings and overseeing the work with the firm. As you can imagine a project of this scope involves input from many different sources and personnel from areas such as Career & Technical Education, academic, administrative, facilities, security, co-curricular, etc. in addition to community leaders from the area where the will be school located. The firm's personnel who I have been directly dealing with in this regard, Jerry Rubino and Rodney Watkins, have been extremely cooperative with all request for revisions, clarification, meetings, State approvals, etc. That project is moving forward as scheduled.

The district has also recently secured funding for a major renovation of another of its high schools at the West Caldwell Campus. Di Cara-Rubino is the architectural firm on this project also. They have been responsive to the need for expediency in this regard. Meetings have been held to discuss the design of the renovation and addition with appropriate personnel to ensure that all the concerns of the CTE and academic programs are met. Design revisions have been made very quickly following each meeting and this initial process of the project has gone well.

In my prior years as a district administrator, 10 years as high school principal and 20 as a Superintendent of Schools, prior to retiring in 2010 I have been involved in many building projects. There have been times when the relationship between the school district officials and the architects has become counterproductive. That has not been the case working with this firm. They have been very cooperative, responsive and understanding of the educational concerns of district personnel.

Respectfully,


Dr. Frank A. Cocchiola
Former Interim Superintendent of Schools
Essex County Vocational-Technical School District