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**Re: Regarding Your Comments about NJ21st**

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**From** NJ21st Team <team@nj21st.com>

**Date** Tue 9/16/2025 11:28 AM

**To** Liza Viana <lviana@bhtwp.com>; Susan Poage <spoage@bhtwp.com>

**Cc** boe@bhpsnj.org <boe@bhpsnj.org>; Angie Devanney <adevanney@bhtwp.com>; Manuel Couto <mcouto@bhtwp.com>; John Foster <jfoster@bhtwp.com>; Margaret Illis <millis@bhtwp.com>; Bill Machado <bmachado@bhtwp.com>; chendricks@bhpsnj.org <chendricks@bhpsnj.org>

Yes we will absolutely publish this in full. We also look forward to your response to our questions. Thank you for your response

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**From:** Liza Viana <lviana@bhtwp.com>

**Sent:** Tuesday, September 16, 2025 11:01:48 AM

**To:** NJ21st Team <team@nj21st.com>; Susan Poage <spoage@bhtwp.com>

**Cc:** boe@bhpsnj.org <boe@bhpsnj.org>; Angie Devanney <adevanney@bhtwp.com>; Manuel Couto <mcouto@bhtwp.com>; John Foster <jfoster@bhtwp.com>; Margaret Illis <millis@bhtwp.com>; Bill Machado <bmachado@bhtwp.com>; chendricks@bhpsnj.org <chendricks@bhpsnj.org>

**Subject:** Re: Regarding Your Comments about NJ21st

John, this is my response to this and all of your other emails, and it is as forthright yet respectful as I can possibly be on this topic, and hopefully you can respect this: I am choosing to spend my time doing work for our residents, period. Getting things done and addressing their concerns as best as I can is my priority. I don't think the average taxpaying resident would prefer me to instead spend my time and energy answering emails such as these.

Sure, you can continue your OPRA requests in your search for "wrongdoing", since you tend to suspect some type of inappropriate shenanigans going on in government. But we are always attempting to do good things for the residents of this town the best we can. The Township will work with the BOE leadership the way we collectively think is best for this town. We will focus our energy on what is constructive. Our residents want to see things getting done, they want us to take care of problems, they want to feel like they are being heard. THIS is what we strive to do every.single.day. And we will work to be as transparent as we can while doing it.

Will we make mistakes? Probably. Will we try to learn from them? Absolutely. Are we always doing our best? Without a doubt.

You can pick this email apart all you want; I'd love it if you actually published this in its entirety. But you probably won't. But I'm not going to worry about it – I'm going to keep putting my energy into doing positive things for this town. I'm not only the Township Administrator, but I'm a resident, and a mom of two kids in this district. I have a vested interest to do my best every day. As I've said before, I always welcome constructive feedback on how we can be more transparent or communicate things better. If you ever have any recommendations along those lines, I will be happy to read them.

Thank you and good luck.

Liza Viana  
Berkeley Heights Township Administrator  
908-464-2700, ext 2232  
lviana@bhtwp.com

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**From:** NJ21st Team <team@nj21st.com>

**Date:** Monday, September 15, 2025 at 8:28 PM

**To:** Susan Poage <spoage@bhtwp.com>, Liza Viana <lviana@bhtwp.com>

**Cc:** boe@bhpsnj.org <boe@bhpsnj.org>, Angie Devanney <adevanney@bhtwp.com>, Manuel Couto <mcouto@bhtwp.com>, John Foster <jfoster@bhtwp.com>, Margaret Illis <millis@bhtwp.com>, Bill Machado <bmachado@bhtwp.com>, chendricks@bhpsnj.org <chendricks@bhpsnj.org>

**Subject:** Regarding Your Comments about NJ21st

**CAUTION:** This email has originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Ms. Viana and Ms. Poage,

As a result of an OPRA request, I became aware of comments made by Councilwoman Poage and Town Administrator Viana regarding NJ21st in communication with the BOE over the turf field.

**Ms. Viana** – not once have we resorted to name-calling. What would it feel like if people referred to you as a “town secretary” or a “political operative paid by the Township”?

**Ms. Poage** – are you aware that the owner of the other news outlet in our community does not hold a journalism degree? Does that not matter because she runs your campaign ads? Are you aware that a very long list of respected journalists—Bob Woodward included—never earned journalism degrees? Did you ever consider that having a degree in another field might actually make someone a stronger journalist?

In a conversation about a turf field, neither of you encouraged the Rec Commissioner to answer the BOE's questions—instead, you tried to make it about us and your opinions about journalism. Why? Why in the world would you bring us up in that

discussion? Granted, we educated the community (and you) about the potential legal issues the town may run into and the inaccuracies the town communicated to residents—is that what you are angry about?

You both took the time to reference us in 2–3 emails, yet you cannot answer a single meaningful question we've posed about issues that directly affect this town—such as the violations connected to the sewage plant. On the issue connected to the turf field, the attorney answered all of the substantive questions—you demonstrated no interest in explaining your actions or your vote. Why?

In that email chain you criticized an elected representative for informing the public of her perspective on an important issue going so far as to imply it was poor governance—you get this is America, right? People are allowed to do that, and it's actually a good thing for an elected representative to communicate with the public. You seemed more bothered by what the BOE representative shared than the fact that the Recreation Commissioner committed to sharing nothing.

You engage in minimizing and name-calling, even suggesting we are casting a "dark cloud" over the community. Yet you never take the time to engage in a conversation with us, in writing, on what specifically you take issue with.

Was it the over 300 signatures our reported generated on behalf of BHFD and in the interest of public safety?  
Was it the coverage of campaign contributions from a town vendor to the Devanney BOE campaign?  
Was it our coverage of the flooding issue where we provided frustrated residents a platform to discuss their feelings about your campaign platform against their reality?  
Was it pointing out the inaccuracies surrounding your collective narrative on the Transportation issue last year?  
Our coverage of the council dismantling the local ethics Board?  
Issues connected to the CFO controversies?  
Coverage of the AG report in connection to the former chief of police?  
The state comptrollers report on inappropriate police trainings?  
The multiple DEP violation on the sewage plant?

Are these the "dark clouds"? Where did these "dark clouds" come from? Did NJ21st create these?

And yes—we are biased. But there's an important difference: we are transparent about it when others are not. Calling journalism outlets run by people "biased" is like calling water "wet." You should also be clear where our bias resides. Unlike others, our bias isn't political; our bias connects to having a very critical eye on everything people in power do as a means of educating the public.

We don't block or erase content that challenges us. You, on the other hand, call us biased while refusing to use NJ21st as a platform to share your own perspective. That's your right, but let's be clear: when you withhold your perspective and evade questions, it's not our reporting that creates "bias"—it's your silence.

Again, and for the record, if there are factual inaccuracies either of you can point to in our reporting—**with evidence and in writing**—then we are more than happy to issue a correction - we fully acknowledge we aren't perfect and we won't resort to name calling and deflection in discussing it with you.

We remain nonprofit, fact-based, and independent.

Sincerely,

**John Migueis**

Founder and Editor

<https://nj21st.com/>

