



TOWNSHIP OF EAST BRUNSWICK

BRAD J. COHEN
MAYOR

April 11, 2019

I am writing in response to the recent events that occurred at East Brunswick High School regarding an altercation between two young women yesterday. I have spoken with the Superintendent of the East Brunswick School System and the Police Department and have been briefed on the circumstances. As you should be aware, details, names, and other identifying information must be protected as these young women are minors.

What seems to be clear regarding the incident is that a young Muslim woman was involved in a physical altercation with another young lady. Board of Education policy has been set to administer punishment to both parties whenever there is fighting in the schools. It is up to the Board of Education's Administration to determine the level of punishment. It is my understanding that there was an unequal distribution of punishment given in this instance. The perpetrator was given a far worse punishment.

I have been assured that the Muslim woman and her family have been seen and offered any help needed from the school psychologists and support staff. There is absolutely no truth to the rumor that she will not be allowed to walk at graduation.

I am also aware that the perpetrator posted an inflammatory statement on Snap Chat which has also been shared throughout social media. The Superintendent was made aware of this fact and he immediately reported the entire incident to our East Brunswick Police Department (EBPD). Our EBPD immediately investigated the incident and determined that this did, in fact, rise to the level of a bias incident. As such, they consulted with the Middlesex County Prosecutors Office and followed all Attorney General Guidelines. It was determined that while this was a bias incident, it did not rise to the level of a hate crime. The perpetrator was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, harassment, simple assault and cyber-harassment.

It truly saddens me that we are even having this discussion, especially given the circumstances that occurred in New Zealand such a short time ago. Bias, in any form, is unacceptable in this community and it is simply NOT who we are or what we stand for. I am heartened that all the comments I have heard or read regarding this incident were met with outrage.

Let me be very clear in that I stand with our Muslim friends and neighbors in condemning this entire incident. When any group is targeted, we, in East Brunswick, must stand united in our resolve to put a swift end to such actions. As such, we will be planning an open forum in the next few days to discuss this issue. I will send out notices as soon as a date, time and location have been determined. I hope that many residents in our community attend as we cannot allow incidents such as this to define our community. We are so much better than this!

Respectfully,



Brad J. Cohen, Mayor