

Partner CJ Griffin Quoted in Article on Pleasantville School Board's New Attorney Contract

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Partner CJ Griffin quoted in Press of Atlantic City article, "Pleasantville school board discusses attorney contract in closed session." The article explains that following a closed session discussion that the school business administrator said was improper, school board members voted to postpone a resolution to approve the board attorney's new contract Tuesday.

CJ Griffin, an attorney for Pashman Stein Walder Hayden and an expert in media law, said that, generally, contract approval for professional services should be discussed in public.

"It certainly is questionable whether that is the type of discussion that could occur in a closed session meeting," Griffin said. "At the very least it's not pro-transparency and it's keeping the public in the dark about legal spending, which is thousands or tens of thousands of dollars or more each year."

Griffin said the state Open Public Records Act does permit the school board to discuss pending or anticipated litigation in closed session, but only specific to that litigation, not how much to pay an attorney or whether the contract with the board attorney will be renewed.

"As in most circumstances, there's a way to be pro-transparency here," Griffin said, such as speaking generally about the litigation in public without revealing confidential information.

"Ultimately the public is going to see the bills, so if it's really about the amount of time being billed, I don't see how that falls within the exemption or isn't something the public is entitled to know."