

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
April 10, 2012

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on April 10, 2012 in the Harry M. Dengler, Jr. Performing Arts Center at the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Ritchie Webb, President
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Vice President
Ms. Irene Boyle
Mr. Scott E. Congdon
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Mike Morris
Mr. William Oettinger
Mr. Mr. Mark Shubin
Mr. Anthony Sposato

ADMINISTRATORS:

Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Mrs. Barbara Markowitz
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan
Dr. Geeta Heble
Mr. Anthony Devlin
Mrs. Theresa Hinterberger

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS: Approximately 50 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Jennifer Burns

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

Mr. Webb stated that prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held where personnel and contract issues were discussed.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Webb requested those in attendance join in the salute to the flag.

3. Announcements

None

Mr. Webb read the following statement:

During the March 27th Public Meeting, each of the labor groups were asked to give their permission to join the Regional Insurance Consortium comprised of area school districts. This is an important opportunity for Neshaminy because the buying power of such a consortium offers us the potential to save hundreds of thousands of dollars insurance costs each year with no negative impact to our employers. I think you would all agree that this is truly a no-brainer. Prior to last week's deadline, I received permission to join the insurance consortium from each of our labor groups, with one notable exception; with that being the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers. To be clear, the NFT, did not turn us down, they didn't respond to us at all. Although, the deadline to respond to the consortium has come and gone, I reached out to them yesterday asking for an extension. Thankfully, they have agreed to give us time until the end of this week to commit to joining them. So now I turn directly to the leaders of the Teacher's Union, and I ask you once again, to please consider allowing your NFT members to join this consortium. Failure to join this consortium will hurt so many people both in and out of this district. The increased numbers of our large labor force will add significant buying power to the consortium, which would in turn help us to achieve true savings in our healthcare costs now and in the future. Lower healthcare premiums means those of our employees that contribute towards their healthcare would see a reduction in what is taken out of their paychecks, and

reduced costs means savings to our bottom line, which ultimately could spare student programs from being cut and employees from being laid off. But we cannot do this as a splintered district. If we are to maximize our savings opportunity we need all our labor groups to comply. We need the NFT to join the others in giving their permission to join the consortium. If we fail in this opportunity, and if a single program is cut or a single employee is terminated the community will look back upon this moment with deep regret. Please do not let this be yet any instance that an unfortunate decision hurt our district. I ask for NFT President, Louise Boyd, to respond to me no later than Friday, April 13th, 2012, by 4:00 p.m., with a favorable reply.

Mr. Webb made a motion that the original request made on March 27th, 2012 is amended and the expiration date be changed from April 3rd, 2012 to April 13th, 2012 at 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Shubin seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

4. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Muenker commented that a Bucks County Courier Times editorial recently called for a statement of clarification on his behalf to his statement that both sides have to bend a little if an agreement is to be reached. Dr. Muenker said his statement never was intended to compromise the Board's present position regarding contract talks. He said his record demonstrates that he would not suggest settling an unaffordable contract. He said he has been clear that the district faces a daunting task of reconciling the proposed 2012-2013 budget. Dr. Muenker stated that there is room for agreement in both the economic areas as well as some of the non-economic issues and it does not have to be all or nothing and he stands by this statement. He remarked that he has yet to witness contracts that were settled where one side got all that was proposed.

Dr. Muenker advised the Board on the following:

- Three Neshaminy High School students entered the Regional Science Research Competition.
- Everitt's Reading Olympians earn a Blue Ribbon.
- Neshaminy Dance Team and Interact Club raised over \$2,200 during their rendition of Neshaminy Idol.
- Neshaminy Drama Club will be presenting their annual student directed one act plays, April 11th and 13th, at the Black Box Theater at Neshaminy High School.

Mr. Profy stated that there was a pending personnel matter, which requires the appointment of a hearing officer. Mr. Profy recommended to the Board that Thomas J. Profy, IV, be appointed hearing officer in that personnel matter.

Mr. Webb made a motion to have Thomas J. Profy, IV, be appointed as hearing officer in the personnel matter.

Mr. Sposato seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

5. Public Comment

Justin, Middletown Trace Apartments, student of TLC, informed the Board how important TLC has been to him and many other students. He said it has made a big difference in his life as far as his grades, his self esteem and his attitude. Justin said the students of TLC have a program called Service Learning, in which the students participate in "Aid for Friends" delivering meals to shut-ins. He said this is very rewarding for the students and beneficial to the recipients of the program. Justin urged the Board to keep The Learning Center open.

Charles Alfonso, Middletown Township, semi-retired business executive, said he would like to know why the Neshaminy School District offers 23 business courses when other neighboring school districts offer much less. He added that none of Neshaminy's business courses offer college credits. Mr. Alfonso stated that more business courses add up to more teachers' salaries and more expense to Neshaminy. He questioned why the district would cut 10th Grade Physical Education and 8th Grade Spanish courses and still continue to offer so many business courses.

Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, retired, remarked that TLC is a wonderful program and he wonders why it is always being considered for elimination at budget time. He said TLC is an example of the best that Neshaminy has to offer. Mr. Rodos inquired why there are proposed increases in the budget for several items such as Total Instructional Program Expenses, IU Expenses, and Transportation Expenses. He asked for an explanation from the Board regarding these costs.

Almando Carrasquillo, Langhorne, retired State Trooper, commented that the remarks from Justin regarding TLC were very poignant; however, he fears that due to the lack of funds there will be closings and a plea should be sent to the NFT and not to the Board, because they are the reason for the financial situation. Mr. Carrasquillo asked Mr. Webb to provide a comprehensive list (prior to the next meeting) of all the things that the district has lost because of demands from the NFT, e.g., layoffs since 2008 and program cuts.

6. Items for Discussion

a) Budget Development

Dr. Muenker gave the Board an update on the budget development process. He stated that the alternative programs vary in cost and services; therefore, these programs will be reviewed. Dr. Muenker stated that it is time that recommendations are made on these programs in order to provide relief for the district for next year's budget and future budgets. He also mentioned that there will be a power point presentation at future meetings listing recommendations, including alterations to programs, for the Board to consider. In addition, the Board will be examining every professional and support staff position, including administrative positions, throughout the district. Dr. Muenker said there is a large list of retirees to be approved at the April 25th Public Meeting. Also, the middle school scheduling and staffing needs will be reviewed, specifically the Instructional Opportunity Period block of time. Dr. Muenker stated that line by line budget recommendations for all departments will be provided to the Board with analysis. Dr. Muenker read budget recommendations from the public and stated that the list will be posted on the website.

Mr. Webb asked how much the 33 or 34 retirees will cost the district.

Dr. Muenker stated that the 34 retirees will cost the district \$4,786,581,000.

Mr. Webb asked if the initial cash layout of the current year's budget will be a million dollars.

Dr. Muenker clarified it would be half of that because the two payments are spread out half this fiscal year, half next year.

Dr. Webb stated that the million dollars is something that the district did not budget for.

Dr. Muenker stated that the district budgeted for 11 retirees and now there are 34 retirees.

Mr. Morris asked Dr. Muenker to clarify if this \$5 million is in addition to the \$12 million deficit.

Dr. Muenker stated that the deficit could be as high as \$14 million.

Mr. Congdon asked if future spouses would be in addition to that number.

Dr. Muenker replied that spouses would be in addition to that number.

Mr. Webb stated that the Board did challenge such a case and at arbitration the Board lost that challenge.

Mr. Koutsouradis asked if a teacher claims a grandchild as a dependent is the district responsible for that coverage as well.

Dr. Muenker stated that if they are legally a dependent they would be covered.

7. Items for Approval tonight

a) Approval of Student Disciplinary Action

Mr. Webb presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, a disciplinary hearing of the Neshaminy Board of School Directors was held on March 21, 2012.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors accepts the recommendation of the Neshaminy School District administration and hereby determines that the students be permanently expelled from Neshaminy School District and approves the adjudication as prepared by the solicitor.

Mr. Sposato seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

8. Items for Approval at the April 25th Public Board Meeting

a) Bids/budgets transfers

Mrs. Markowitz advised the Board on the following:

Budget Transfer Report: Working Copy 12 - 5

Amount: \$15,265

Description: Funds needed to update AED's throughout the District

Mrs. Markowitz stated that Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy 12 - 5) will be presented at the April 25th Public Board Meeting for approval.

9. Committee Reports

a) Board Policies

Ms. Boyle advised the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for May 9th, at 5:15 p.m. in the Board Room. Topics will include acceptable use policy and revision of employee background checks.

b) Educational Development

Mr. Shubin informed the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for April 23rd, at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room.

c) Finance/Facilities

Mr. Webb advised the Board that the date for the next meeting will be announced at a later date.

d) IU Board

Mrs. Cummings informed the Board that the last meeting had two presentations regarding the Brain Steps Programs. The first presentation discussed the Bucks County Concussion Education Team, which discussed educating high school athletes and coaches on concussion. Also discussed was the Bucks

Count Reach Program, which will hold a two-night program on April 25th and May 2nd for individuals who have obtained a traumatic brain injury to help them learn about support programs available to them. The next IU meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 17th.

e) **Education Foundation**

Dr. Muenker informed the Board that the Spring Phillies Raffle Basket is available at the Poquessing site. Tickets are \$5 each. There will be a drawing on April 20th.

f) **Technical School**

Mr. Koutsouradis advised the Board and the public that students in the district have a great opportunity available at the tech school and he urged parents to check into it. He said the students are offered academic and technical courses and can still participate in sports at their home school.

g) **Technology**

Mr. Congdon advised the Board that the date of the next technology meeting will be announced at a later date.

h) **Ad Hoc Facility Use Update**

Mr. Oettinger announced to the Board that the last meeting was March 20th and they discussed the possible sale of the Eisenhower building, the moving of the Facility Department to the High School, the possibility of school closings and building a new school. The next meeting is scheduled for May 15th at 6 p.m.

10. Public Comment

Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, retired, thanked Mrs. Markowitz for posting the preliminary budget on the website. Mr. Rodos questioned whether Neshaminy receives any money from the Federal government for Medical Assistance Funds for special needs children. Mr. Rodos suggested that the Board use the 2009, 2010, 2011 budget expenditures (excluding contractual items) as a starting point to work out the new budget, which may make the figures more realistic rather than considering wish lists.

Charles Alfonso, Middletown Township, semi-retired business executive, stated that Excel and Word courses are very important; however, he said he had a one-day course in Excel, which he found to be very satisfactory and questioned why it is necessary to have students study this program for an entire semester. Mr. Alfonso said that Neshaminy has at least 10 business courses that can be cut, which would save hundreds of thousands of dollars in teachers' salaries. Mr. Alfonso also remarked that for a very nominal amount of under \$50 Neshaminy should be conducting background checks on all certified staff for the safety of the students.

Angie Manning, Langhorne, New Jersey public school teacher, stated that as a Business Education teacher she can testify to the validity of many of the business courses that are offered at Neshaminy. She said that these courses are very valuable to students to prepare them to manage well in the business world today. Ms. Manning remarked that in her district old laptops were being used by the school board in an effort to go paperless and suggested the Neshaminy School Board take this under consideration.

Almando Carrasquillo, Langhorne, retired State Trooper, suggested that the Board look into the possibility of offering advertising space on the fencing surrounding the stadium, which could gain considerable revenue for the district. He said that monies gained from this venture could be put to use in funding background checks and/or saving programs.

Deanna Zigmond, sophomore at TLC, remarked that The Learning Center has been a life saver to her. She said that TLC is much more than an alternative school and the students feel like part of a family. She invited the Board members to visit TLC and said they will see for themselves how much it has to offer and why it should not be closed.

Bonnie Morath, sophomore at TLC, said that her grades had plummeted in ninth grade, but after attending TLC she has brought them up to where they should be. She concurred with her fellow classmates that TLC is like a family and she implored the Board to keep the school open.

Jennifer Deblieck, Middletown, student at Rider University, said that she is a former TLC student and gives the school the credit for her graduating. She said that she would have been a high school drop out if she had not attended TLC in her senior year.

Emily, student at TLC, commented that if TLC were to close many students would not reach their full potential. She said TLC offers a smaller and more protected atmosphere than a bigger high school. She said TLC and the teachers there give shy kids more self confidence and support to help to improve their grades.

11. Future Topics

Dr. Muenker stated that the Bull Dog Association has requested the use of the high school fields on Sundays starting this spring. Dr. Muenker asked for the Board's consensus subject to all of the requirements of meeting the field usage form and presenting a liability form proving insurance and will abide by all rules and regulations associated the Neshaminy's fields.

Mr. Webb made a motion to allow the Bull Dog Association the use of Neshaminy High School Fields on Sundays provided the cover all expenses, provide insurance, and meet all rules and regulations.

Mr. Congdon seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

12. Agenda Development for the April 25, 2012 Public Board Meeting

None

13. Board Comment

Mr. Koutsouradis said that he has always been a supporter of the TLC program and he advised that they must do everything they can to reduce their operating costs. He also commented that the negotiating team should make sure that the new wording in the contract covers the exclusion of any dependants acquired after the retirement of an employee.

Mr. Shubin thanked the TLC students for talking about their experiences in this program. He said he had the opportunity to visit TLC last year and found it to be a wonderful program. Nevertheless, with a large deficit facing the Board, he said that priorities will need to be set and difficult decisions may become necessary.

Mr. Sposato said he is unaware of any plans for closing TLC and advised the students not to be anxious about it at this time. He stated that many things will be looked at in the near future, but he doesn't see TLC as being first in line for closing. He also encouraged the students of TLC to believe in themselves and have the confidence that they can succeed in whatever they choose to accomplish.

Mr. Congdon applauded the students of TLC for their courage to speak on behalf of their school.

Mrs. Cummings thanked the TLC students for standing up for what they believe in. She said that no decisions have been made at this time and she is well aware of the importance of the TLC program.

Ms. Boyle thanked the TLC students from expressing their support for the program. She stated that she is very much an advocate of TLC and she wants the students to know that they have her support. Ms. Boyle

April 10, 2012

also said that she does not see anything wrong with 23 business courses and she thinks there is a difference in the benefit between a one-day course of excel and a full semester program.

14. Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. Webb moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Shubin seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 8:24 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Jennifer Burns
Board Secretary