

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
January 25, 2011

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on January 25, 2011, in the Harry M. Dengler, Jr. Performing Arts Center at Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Ritchie Webb, President
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Vice President
Ms. Irene M. Boyle
Mr. Scott Congdon
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Richard M. Eccles
Mr. Mike Morris
Mr. William D. O'Connor
Mr. William Oettinger

ADMINISTRATORS:

Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Mrs. Patricia Boylan
Dr. Geeta Heble
Mr. Kevin Kane
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan

BOARD MEMBER ABSENT:

OTHERS: Approximately 45 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Jennifer Burns

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

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

Call to Order

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Announcements

None

Public Comment

Charles Alfonso, semi-retired sales executive, Laurel Oaks, presented the Board Members with an analysis of the PSSA rankings going back to 2001. Mr. Alfonso reviewed and summarized the report, highlighting that 70 to 80 percent of Neshaminy teachers rank as adequate to excellent. Mr. Alfonso stated that he is concerned about the remaining 20 to 30 percent of teachers that may be lowering Neshaminy's ranking among other Pennsylvania school districts. Mr. Alfonso reviewed Neshaminy's ranking in comparison to other school districts over the past nine years. Mr. Alfonso stated that the report indicates that Neshaminy is merely a mediocre school district, which does not justify the top pay compensation that the NPT is receiving.

Steve Rodos, semi-retired, Villages of Flowers Mill, opened his comments by saying that he respectfully took exception to the previous speaker's comments. Mr. Rodos voiced his support for Barbara Markowitz as the acting Financial Director stating that she is doing an excellent job. Commenting on the new proposed budget, Mr. Rodos noted that less than 1 percent of the increased expenses are to be used for educational programs. He stated that the remaining increases are attributed to non educational items such as, busing and support services. Mr. Rodos implored the Board not to propose a list of educational program cuts as suggested ways to reduce the budget, because the system and the children cannot afford it.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Burns presented the minutes of November 23rd, December 6th, December 22nd, 2010 Public Board Meetings and January 11, 2011 Public Work Session Meeting.

Mr. O'Connor noted a correction to the spelling of Marianne on the December 6th minutes, on page 13, under Public Comment. He also noted that the proper name of the organization is Neshaminy High School Vocal Music Boosters. Mrs. Burns stated that said request was noted.

Mr. Webb noted a correction on page 18, on the December 22nd meeting, under Motion: Approval of an Agreement of Sale, the sum of Six Million (\$6,000,000) is to read, Six point six million (\$6,600,000). Mrs. Burns stated that said request was noted.

Upon motion of Mr. Morris and seconded by Mrs. Cummings the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the November 23rd, December 6th, December 22nd, 2010, Public Board Meetings and January 11, 2011 Public Work Session Meeting.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Muenker advised the Board on the following:

- The high school drama classes present the fourth annual winter show, "The Idiot's Guide to High School" on January, 25th, 26th, 27th, and 28th at 7:00 pm.
- Commended Board Members for their time and dedication to the Neshaminy School District.
- Announced that the District will inform parents of any school closings or delays due to inclement weather via Neshaminy web site, Global Connect, TV News and Neshaminy TV.

Approval of Treasurer's Report, Check Register, and Exonerations of Personal and Per Capita Tax

Dr. Muenker presented the following for approval:

- November and December, 2010 Treasurer's Report, subject to audit
- Check Register - November and December, 2010
- Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy) 11-3
- Investment summary
- Personal and per capita tax exonerations for November and December, 2010

Dr. Muenker noted that, thanks to the Board's diligence, the High School Construction Project came in under the expected cost.

Mr. Eccles inquired about an item on page 48 regarding two checks for police services from Middletown Township.

Dr. Muenker responded he will look into the matter and get back with an answer at a later date.

Mr. Eccles asked if the money that Middletown Township is holding for permits and fees can be placed in escrow and when will this money be returned.

Mr. Profy stated that those funds were paid by the School District to Middletown Township. At the end of the project when the final costs of all the permits and inspections were determined, any monies remaining would be remitted back to the School District.

Mr. Eccles inquired when Neshaminy can expect an accounting for the monies.

Mr. Profy responded he would have to refer to the accounting department and Mr. Paradise.

Dr. Muenker stated that his recommendation would be to inquire as to the status of that account.

Mr. Eccles asked Mr. Profy if he will make the inquiry to the township.

Mr. Profy responded that he will do so.

Mr. Webb asked and received the Board's consensus to direct Mr. Profy to make the inquiry.

Mr. Eccles inquired again if the money could be put into an escrow account until the matter is resolved.

Mr. Profy said any payments that would be remitted would have to be designated for further improvements to the project.

Mr. Webb clarified Mr. Eccles' point, asking if the School Board can withhold the money until the matter is settled.

Mr. Profy stated he would not recommend that.

Mr. Morris inquired about the return on the construction on the high school on page 38, in the amount of \$643,853.65 asking if the project is coming in under budget.

Mr. Webb stated that the high school project is coming in under budget. He added that there are some funds left that must be used for another area of the high school project.

Mr. Morris congratulated Mr. Webb, Mr. Eccles, and the Administration for their straight forward handling of the High School Construction Project. He also inquired about a check register item on page 49, for an accounting of irrigation line repairs in the amount of \$13,491.26.

Dr. Muenker asked Mr. Minotti to respond.

Mr. Minotti stated that the correct description is insulation for the new irrigation system at the high school for the varsity soccer and football field.

Mr. Morris asked if this project was submitted for quote.

Mr. Minotti responded yes.

Mr. Morris inquired how many systems and zones are involved.

Mr. Minotti stated there were four systems with five zones on each field.

Mr. Morris stated that he would like to review the paperwork on this project in the near future.

Mr. Minotti responded affirmatively.

Mr. O'Connor asked for an explanation why the disbursements to the solicitor's firm were a little higher than usual in the month of October.

Mr. Profy responded that it was during the period of time of negotiations regarding Neshaminy Middle School and also the tax assessment appeal.

Mrs. Cummings asked for clarification about a charge for asbestos services on page 41.

Mr. Minotti stated that it is a fee for a scheduled six month inspection for all the schools in the district.

Mr. Koutsouradis moved the November and December, 2010, Treasurer's Report be approved, subject to audit, Check Register for November and December, 2010, Budget Transfer Report Working Copy 11-3, Investment summary, and the Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations for November and December, 2010 be approved. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said report.

Certified and Support Personnel Actions

Dr. Muenker presented the following for approval:

- Elections – Certified Personnel
- Resignations and Leaves of Absence – Certified Personnel
- Elections – Support Personnel
- Sabbatical Leaves – Certified Personnel

Dr. Muenker noted there is a candidate under consideration for Business Administrator.

Dr. Muenker recommended the approval for the Personnel Report for Certified and Support Personnel.

Mr. Koutsouradis moved that the Certified and Support Personnel reports be approved. Mr. Eccles seconded the motion.

Mrs. Cummings asked for clarification why the majority of the list is classified as emergency certified day to day substitutes, which has not been the usual in the past.

Dr. Muenker explained that these individuals are college graduates who are not certified for teaching and who attend a training program twice a year to become emergency certified substitutes. He further explained that these individuals can only serve as substitute teachers only and cannot be considered for permanent positions.

Mrs. Cummings asked Dr. Muenker if he knows why there are less certified teachers applying for substitute positions at this time.

Dr. Muenker responded that it is a competitive job market and they may feel that there are not enough opportunities in the Neshaminy School District.

Mrs. Cummings also queried if the reason could be that the day to day substitutes are becoming long term substitutes.

Dr. Muenker stated that there could be a connection with regard to the opportunities that they may avail themselves of through the system. He also stated that inside candidates or outside candidates have the same opportunities for being hired for the long term.

Mr. Morris inquired if candidates are selected from the REAP system.

Dr. Muenker stated that the REAP system is very often used to select applicants.

Mr. Morris asked if a REAP applicant or outside applicant are considered differently.

Dr. Muenker responded that their applications are treated the same.

Mr. Webb clarified that the position for business manager is an acting position at this time.

The Board approved said reports by a vote of eight ayes, and one nay, (Mr. O'Connor.)

Extra Curricular Staff and Salary Report

Dr. Muenker presented the extra-curricular staff and salary report for approval.

Mr. Eccles seconded the motion.

Mr. Eccles inquired why the majority of extra-curricular instructors are outside the district as opposed to using certified staff that is already employed by Neshaminy.

Dr. Muenker stated that the extra-curricular positions are offered to the certified staff first and if no interest is received then the position would be posted outside the district.

Mr. Eccles asked if there has been a recent increase of outside interest in the positions since the dispute with the NFT.

Dr. Muenker responded that he has not seen that pattern within Neshaminy.

Mr. Eccles asked if there is a report showing the number of non-certified individuals serving the district compared to the number of positions that exist.

Dr. Muenker answered that the information exists in a previous report given out earlier this year; however, he will compile it in an easier format.

Mrs. Cummings asked how the positions are advertised outside of the district.

Dr. Muenker responded the individual schools will post those opportunities, or through word of mouth.

Mrs. Cummings inquired if those positions are posted on Neshaminy's website.

Dr. Muenker answered they are posted on the individual school websites, specifically the three middle schools and the high school.

Mr. Congdon asked if the non-certified individuals have to comply with Act 34 and Act 151 clearances.

Dr. Muenker responded that they do.

Mr. Morris noted that on page 87, how the basketball coach can serve both seventh and eighth grade at the same time.

Dr. Muenker said they are both during the winter season; however, they do not overlap.

Mr. Koutsouradis asked if the salaries are consistent or are they subject to an increase.

Dr. Muenker stated they are contracted salaries based on the current bargaining agreement.

The Board unanimously approved said report.

Motion: School Directors Recognition Month

Ms. Boyle presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the role of locally elected school officials has served the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and local communities meeting the needs of public education since the passage of the Free School Act in 1834; and

WHEREAS, these local boards have discharged their responsibilities to public education in a manner which has placed education in the forefront of our educational systems; and

WHEREAS, locally elected officials have distinguished themselves and their communities in this nonpaid, volunteer public service commitment; and

WHEREAS, the contributions of these men and women should be recognized and appreciated by those who benefit from the workings of our public school system.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors hereby proclaims the month of January as School Director Recognition Month.

Mr. Eccles seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: Election of Board Member to the Intermediate Unit Board

Mr. Congdon presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22 is governed by an Intermediate Unit Board of Directors, and

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy School District has duly elected a Board member to participate on the Intermediate Unit Board, and Neshaminy's participation is critical to the operation of the Intermediate Unit, as well as the services afforded the Neshaminy School District, and

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy Board of School Directors has nominated Richard Eccles to serve on the IU Board to fill the unexpired term of Susan Cummings, whose term expires on June 30, 2011, and he is eligible to succeed himself without limitations as to the number of terms or another representative from the school district may be nominated.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors appoint Richard Eccles to serve as the representative to the Bucks County Intermediate Unit Board of Directors.

Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: Approval of revised and New Board Policies

Mrs. Cummings presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, in order to keep District Board Policies updated and current, revisions and new policies are recommended by the administration to the Board Policies Committee for review, and

WHEREAS, recommended policies meet the requirements of Federal Law; and

WHEREAS, after review by the Board Policies Committee, the District is ready to recommend:

Revised Policy 548 (now Policy 547) – Prohibition Against Discrimination and

Harassment of Students and/or Staff (now Discrimination and Harassment)

New Policies 247, 347 and 447 – Discrimination and Harassment

New Policy 548 – Sexual Harassment

Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: 2011-2012 Proposed Preliminary Budget Available for Public Inspection

Mr. Eccles presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, Act I of 2006 of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requires the 2011 – 2012 Proposed Preliminary Budget of the School District to be available of public inspection at least twenty (20) days prior to its adoption; and

WHEREAS, Act I of 2006 of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requires the Board of School Directors to give public notice of its intention to adopt its 2011 – 2012 proposed Preliminary budget at least ten (10) days prior to its adoption; and

WHEREAS, School District did on January 20, 2010, publish the annexed Notice of Availability for Public Inspection and Notice of Intent to Adopt Proposed Preliminary Budget of School District as required by Act I 2006 of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors ratifies and confirms that the proposed 2011, 12 Preliminary Budget of the School District was made available to the public for inspection beginning on January 19, 2011, at the District Office Reception Area and on the School District website, and that the attached Notice of Availability for public Inspection and Notice of Intent to Adopt 2011 – 12 proposed Preliminary Budget of the School District on February 8, 2011, was duly advertised on January 19 , 2011, as required by law.

Ms. Boyle seconded the motion.

Mr. Webb noted that this is a preliminary budget and more work must be done to reach a final budget.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Federal Programs

Dr. Muenker noted that there was one additional grant for the month of December. The Consumer Wellness Center Grant in the sum of \$1,000 for the nutrition education program at the high school bringing the total to \$2,130,496.00.

Other Board Business

Mr. O'Connor asked Dr. Muenker for an update of the solicitor's investigation regarding the incident of his son's image being used on the NFT's website without permission. He further noted that the same video clip was also used on You Tube and was subsequently removed from You Tube after Mrs. O'Connor contacted them.

Dr. Muenker responded that Mr. Profy forwarded a letter to the NFT with a recommendation to remove the image, and they responded by filing a complaint of an unfair labor practice against Neshaminy School District.

Mr. Morris asked if it was the actual image or a likeness.

Mr. O'Connor responded that it was clearly an image of his son used without permission.

Mr. Morris declared that it is unfortunate that the NFT is taking advantage of a minor and the entire situation is shameful.

Mrs. Cummings suggested that the subject of remote participation for absentee Board Members be revisited.

Mr. Webb replied that the subject should be presented to the Policy Committee.

Public Comment

Mark Shubin, sales executive, Langhorne, suggested that it would be helpful if the budget showed the comparison to previous years on the line items. Mr. Shubin noted that this would help to identify trends. Mr. Shubin wished the Board success for the upcoming negotiations meeting on January 27th, noting that the format is appropriate. Mr. Shubin suggested that agreeing on specific points in the agenda prior to the meeting can bring more success to the negotiations.

Steve Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, thanked Mr. Webb for providing answers to his previous questions. Mr. Pirritano stated that educational process includes teachers, parents, and administration all working together. He mentioned that the home access is an important tool in this process and he has noticed that not all teachers participate in the process. He asked if Dr. Muenker can comment regarding teacher participation and he would like to know if it is considered to be mandatory or optional for the teachers. Mr. Pirritano concluded by asking for suggestions on how parents can better guide their children on selecting courses in high school.

Charles Alfonso, semi-retired, Langhorne, mentioned that the facts that were included in his analysis of the ranking of Neshaminy School District were obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of Education's website under PSSA results. Mr. Alfonso stated that his passion is being misunderstood for anger. He said that he is passionate about the quality of education that the parents of Neshaminy are paying for, and in his opinion; the children are not receiving the education they deserve. Mr. Alfonso noted that formerly there were informative pages on the Neshaminy website from the teachers, which are no longer available. He asked Dr. Muenker if these informative web pages can be reinstated to help parents and students. Mr. Alfonso wished Mr. Webb success, strength, and conviction on the next negotiation meeting.

Steve Rodos, semi-retired, Villages of Flowers Mill, stated in response to a previous speakers inquiry, that the budget does include three previous years for comparison purposes. Mr. Rodos said that he is an emergency certified substitute and he would be happy to clarify certain facts. He verified that a college degree is necessary, as well as a background clearance and a training course. Mr. Rodos said per diem substitutes use a placement system called Aesop, which posts positions 24 hours in advance. Mr. Rodos said that emergency non-certified substitutes cannot become long-term teaching staff unless they become certified.

Almando Carrasquillo, private investigator, Laurel Oaks, Langhorne, said that he has noticed a trend towards changing leverage and control that teachers unions formerly had over school districts and taxpayers. Mr. Carrasquillo said that the change is leaning more towards the advantage of the taxpayers. He wished the School Board good luck in the upcoming negotiations and hopes for a quick resolution.

Board Comment

Mr. Oettinger asked if parents can access their children's grades through Neshaminy website.

Dr. Muenker replied that it is still an active feature. He further responded to a public comment inquiry regarding home access to assignments, stating that teachers will be encouraged to be active participants. He noted that it is not a mandatory obligation. Dr. Muenker asked Dr. McGee to address the question of course selection.

Dr. McGee stated that the course selection process has begun with plans to speak to freshman, sophomore, and junior classes regarding next year's courses. Additionally, a parent night is scheduled for February 2nd, at Neshaminy High School beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Dr. Muenker added that parents can also consult their child's assigned counselor with regard to course selection. Dr. Muenker welcomed Barbara Markowitz as acting Director of Finance stating that she will do a wonderful job.

Mr. Webb noted that the mediator sets the agenda for the negotiation meeting.

Adjournment

Mr. O'Connor moved the meeting be adjourned and Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Burns
Board Secretary