

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

February 24, 2009

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on February 24, 2009, in the Board Room of the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Ritchie Webb, President
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Vice President
Mr. Joseph R. Blasch
Ms. Irene M. Boyle
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Richard M. Eccles
Mr. Frank Koziol
Mr. William D. O'Connor
Dr. William H. Spitz

ADMINISTRATORS:

Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise
Mrs. Patricia Boylan
Dr. Geeta A. Heble
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan

SECRETARY:

Mrs. Anita E. Walls

SOLICITOR:

Thomas Profy, III, Esquire

OTHERS: Approximately 115 persons from the public, staff and press

Mr. Webb announced that prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held for Board members regarding personnel matters from 6:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.

Call to Order

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Announcements

None.

Public Comment

Mrs. Stacy Kirsch, Langhorne, PA, is a teacher and advised the Board of her concerns: school closings, full day kindergarten and teacher contracts. Mrs. Kirsch advised that it has recently come to her attention that the Board may be discussing the closing of Carl Sandburg Middle School. Mrs. Kirsch is strongly opposed to this negligent action. Mrs. Kirsch is concerned that a group of people who is mostly made up of individuals with no educational background can make a decision that will affect the future of all students in this district without thinking through the consequences. All schools will become overcrowded, class sizes will dramatically increase. One way to raise test scores is to have small class sizes in order for every child to have the attention which they are entitled to. Mrs. Kirsch is aware that once Neshaminy Middle School was closed redistricting was not done well. Maple Point Middle is so overcrowded that Music classes are taught in janitor closets, teachers don't have time in the classroom without students, materials are not organized for the next lesson. Where are we going to put all these students? What do you consider teachable space? What are the class sizes going to be? What are the number of students entering the school district because parents can no longer afford private school? Think this through before making a rash decision as you did by closing Tawanka without a plan. Another concern of Mrs. Kirsch is the lack of information being shared with the parents in the district. Mrs. Kirsch feels many would like to institute a full day kindergarten program. The Board members

seem to agree that this is a great idea for the district and the students, but the issue is paying for same. Many parents are trying to come up with creative ideas to finance this valuable program. The School Board has not made public what they have already considered. It has not been made public the exact findings of the committee. It has not been made public the estimated expense of the program. The Director of Elementary Education has advised that there are nine options which could allow this program to be implemented this fall. None of this was made public. How can we help without all the information? Mrs. Kirsch is concerned with the lack of progress with the teacher's contract. Teachers are the most important part of running a school. They are the most important part of the reputation of a school. The education of our future is in their hands. Good teachers are necessary in our lives in order to hold any sort of career or job. All of us can read, write or compute any type of math problem due to teachers. It is time that respect is shown to the very valuable group of professionals. If the district wants to continue to be a competitive school district we need to attract good teachers. In order to attract good teachers we need to compensate them and treat them well. It is time to meet with the teachers on a regular basis, in good faith to settle this contract.

Mr. Webb clarified that the Board is not aware that Carl Sandburg was slated for closure. Public meetings were held in which full day kindergarten was discussed. Mr. Webb advised that Mrs. Kirsch's information was inaccurate.

Mr. Pat Miller, Langhorne, PA, spoke regarding full day kindergarten and stated that he believes that like a good building a child's education requires a solid foundation and full day kindergarten provides that education. Half day kindergarten was intended to help children transition from home to school. Now, most children attend some type of preschool. This transition period is no longer needed. It actually is counterproductive. Our children are expected to master in kindergarten what we had to master in first grade. Half day kindergarten does not provide enough time to teach the children all that is expected of them. This is why the district currently requires a pre-first program and additional reading specialists in first grade. Studies have shown that greater progress in literacy, math and general learning skills. Full day allows students more individual and small group interaction with the teacher. Furthermore, a study published in the Early Child Development and Care, Volume 160, Issue 1 studies the effects of full day and half day kindergarten on children's second grade academic outcome. The results indicate that the children who were in full day programs scored significantly higher on both math and reading on standardized achievement tests. Fewer children from the full day program were retained in the grade. Finally, children who attended full day were absent less during the school year. Full day kindergarten offers more time and opportunity to explore subjects. Children of working parents are bused all over. A full day kindergarten would eliminate the need and expense of the mid day bus runs as well as the pre-first program. Full day kindergarten will make the district more attractive to young families. Full day kindergarten can provide income opportunities and offered to students outside the district on a tuition basis. The children will have a better opportunity to succeed and better test scores. Two obsolete programs could be eliminated.

Mr. Sy Goldstein, Villages of Flowers Mills, Langhorne, PA, is a retired individual. Mr. Goldstein thanked the Board for their stand on the contract. They are doing the right thing under this current economic situation. An excellent editorial was written in the Courier Times on February 19th. "Out of this world, planet Neshaminy. The latest contract demands are so out of sync with the real world that the union negotiators must be from another planet. Neshaminy teachers have issued contract demands that make them look selfish and unreasonable and disconnected from reality. We wish they would explain themselves so a community that is suffering the ravishes of economic distress could understand what they refuse. Considering the current economic climate the Board's proposal was reasonable, if not generous, 3% annual salary increase, plus step raises." A lot of people would jump at the offer because so many workers are in salary freezes or hit with pay cuts. That's if they still have a job. The average Neshaminy teacher is compensated in the neighborhood of \$100,000 a year if you consider salary plus health benefits. That figure does not include other fringe benefits. Mr. Goldstein and his wife are retired and on social security. They have no pension. They don't mind paying taxes and have supported Neshaminy School District for over 30 years after our children left school. It is important to have taxes and good teachers. There comes a point where we need to be careful. We can't just keep paying what other people ask. We are not an unlimited pot of gold.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mills, Langhorne, PA is a retired attorney and per diem substitute at Neshaminy High School. Mr. Rodos advised that per diem substitutes need a raise. They are the lowest paid of all the substitute teachers in the area at a pay scale of \$85. Mr. Rodos stated that the concept of full day kindergarten was addressed, however Dr. Rattigan's proposal was never addressed. Full day kindergarten would cost approximately \$800,000 to institute with the reduction of the pre-first programs throughout the district. This would save money in the future. Mr. Rodos apologized to Mr. Paradise regarding the \$3M of instructional programs increases, which in fact they were due to increases in health care. The budget is still \$14M short. Mr. Rodos would like answers to the following questions:

- Receipts from Sesame Place – What has the district done to combat this?
- Pennswood Village has cost the district receipts. The residents of Pennswood Village are not a charity.
- Pennsbury receives \$7M more from the state than Neshaminy.
- District has 22.2 federally funded positions – Are they included in the line item for regular salaries?
- Excessive costs of transportation – bus stops and distance?
- Line 500 – other purchased services - \$12.5M containing a projected increase of \$681,000 for next year. How is something labeled other 7.4% of the budget?
- \$725,000 in custodial property and property services.
- \$1.76M increase for building services.

Mr. Paradise is concerned with Mr. Rodos' statements regarding Line 500. Mr. Paradise advised that the state accounting system requires specific items to be placed in that category: tech school, special ed costs, etc. Please do not leave the implication that the district is spending \$12.5M in other expenses.

Mr. Rodos stated that information is given to the taxpayers without any explanation. Taxpayers do not have enough information to form an opinion one way or another. Mr. Rodos is concerned that total spending amounts to over \$10M and only \$2M-\$3M potential savings.

Mr. Webb suggested that Mr. Rodos put his questions in writing and Mr. Paradise will answer same.

Mr. Rodos is concerned with salaries and benefits. He thanked the Board for posting same on the website. Mr. Rodos believes that when the staff needs are decided upon any reductions should be accomplished by attrition and not by layoffs. An out of the ordinary proposal should be made to settle the current contract. There is a lot of give and take in negotiations; however, no one side should give everything and no one side should take everything.

Mr. Larry Pastor, Langhorne, PA, is a business executive with IBM corporation, and has lived in the district for over 25 years and children have attended the Neshaminy schools. Mr. Pastor commented that many teachers in the district are very professional, dedicated to the job, and tremendous contributors to the well being and advancements of the children. Teachers deserve a fair wage. However, despite high taxes, the district still lags in performance and scores are not competitive with many districts that pay less. These are facts. Beyond a certain point, additional money has a diminishing return in the public education system. The current situation is an outrageous demand by the teacher's union on behalf of an overly compensated teaching staff given the increases of the past two contracts. Mr. Pastor advised that this has become personal and addressed the Union and Union President. You are assaulting the intellect and pocket books of each of the individuals in the district. How dare you require more? Many people are coping with increases in health care costs. Perhaps the union is not aware of what has occurred in the private sector over the past two decades. Workers have experienced wage stagnation in the U.S. that is significant, outsourcing, disappearing corporate benefits annually, most firms are limited or suspending increases, pay cuts are common and layoffs are accelerating. Corporations are terminating traditional pension plans daily. Some workers have lost their pensions completely. Health care premiums have increased over the past decade. American workers now pay a significant portion of their health care costs while employed and almost all will be responsible entirely between a bridge of retirement and medicare. Finally, teachers enjoy guaranteed increases despite

performance. Majority of workers are paid in the private sector on performance only. The Union should be embarrassed and the community should continue to speak out on the outrageous demands of this particular contract.

Mr. Pastor advised that in 2002 he vocally objected. Neshaminy has the richest teacher's contract in the state of Pennsylvania by far. The contract on the table by the Board currently is also too rich and unacceptable to taxpayers. Mr. Pastor's suggestion is to pull same and start over. The Board is at a disadvantage. The taxpayers will stand in mass behind the Board. Mr. Pastor questioned:

- Why does the school district collect dues on behalf of the union?
 - Payroll deduction – Pac collections
 - Union monopoly policy – let the union collect it's own dues
- Why does the union control negotiations in an exclusive bargaining clause?
- Why are non members required to pay dues?
- No ability to withdraw and constitutionality question? Union holds all power.
- Do not allow Union to have exceptions/Cap increases
- Why have you seeded all the power to the Unions?

Mr. Pastor advised that less than 50% of people in private section receive any type of increase annually. Teacher has a job for life, guaranteed pay, guaranteed benefits, step increases, etc. This does not face reality. The district will have a deficit, the state will have a deficit. Public workers are causing the deficit. There is no equity with what is occurring in the private sector.

Mr. Pastor would like that all negotiations take place publicly. Let the Union strike and the Board and taxpayers need to make a stand. The taxpayers cannot bear this burden any longer.

Mr. Mike Sicherman, Middletown Township, is the owner of a biotechnical recruiting firm, stated that teachers are working for the greater good of the community and they know they will not get rich. They are part of the community. Our district is still lagging behind Council Rock and Pennsbury in testing scores and performance, yet, they are one of the highest paid districts in the state. Mr. Sicherman finds it hard to believe that there is no room by the Union to give back. Health care is a major concern and would it be so bad for them to pay towards their health care. Mr. Sicherman does not support highway robbery. If their wages are not adequate, maybe they should seek another school district for employment. The County has 7.6% unemployment. Foreclosures are increasing. This is not a time for asking for more and being greedy. What does the taxpayer do? The taxpayers are the source of the revenues. Mr. Sicherman would like to make the public's voice heard.

Student Representative Report

Ms. Meshal Jones, Student Council Treasurer, and Ms. Betsy Thomas, Student Council Vice-President provided the following student representative report:

- "Fame" was presented under the direction of Ms. Cloak
- Cheerleaders were Suburban 1 League Teams – Grand Champions at Temple University
- Bowling Teams are competing at the Eastern Regionals in Allentown
- Boy's Basketball competing for birth in the State playoffs
- Wrestling Team members qualified for Southern Eastern Regionals
- Girl's Indoor Track Team has come to an end
- FBLA will participate in State competition at the end of March

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Muenker provided the following updates:

- Cheerleaders have had a very successful season
- Field Hockey Banquet at Buck Hotel – Girl's had 20 wins, 1 loss and 2 ties - Suburban 1 National Champions
- Numerous students have had signings with colleges

- Music Students have been selected to represent Neshaminy at District 11 Elementary Band festival
- PA Life Smarts State Final – four business students competed
 - Fundraising – Lower South 4th graders – Malaria no more, raised \$430; Oliver Heckman – Collections for Officer Jones, \$1,152.56; Hoops for Heart Event – Maple Point - \$2,000; Ferderbar Elementary Jump Rope for Heart raised money for American Heart Association.
 - Kindergarten Registration will be held on March 6th
 - Dance Team presents Dancing with Faculty to be held on March 12th
 - Laughing Stock will be held on March 19, 20, 21 at 7:00 p.m.
 - Musicals: FAME at High School; Beauty and the Beast – Poquessing; Fiddler on the Roof – Maple Point
 - Informational Night – Boy’s Soccer Team – 8th & 9th graders

Dr. Muenker advised that the Department of Education – Chief Division of School Facilities, Bureau of Budget and Fiscal Management, has reviewed and approved the PLANCON H project documents which need to be officially entered into the minutes of this evening. (See Attachment A).

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Walls presented the minutes of the January 27, 2009 and February 10, 2009 public meetings. Upon motion of Mr. Eccles and seconded by Mr. O’Connor the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the January 27, 2009 and February 10, 2009 Public Meetings.

Approval of Treasurer’s Report, Check Registers, Investments, and Exonerations of Personal and Per Capita Tax

Mr. Paradise presented the following for approval:

- January, 2009 Treasurer’s Reports, subject to audit
- Check Register – January, 2009
- Investment Summary
- Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations – January, 2009

Mr. Blasch moved the January, 2009 treasurer’s reports, subject to audit, check register, investments, and exonerations of personal and per capita tax be approved. Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

Mr. Koziol questioned three accounts payable items from the check register.

The Board approved the Treasurer’s Reports, subject to audit, check registers, investments and personal and per capita tax exonerations by a vote of eight ayes and one nay (Mr. O’Connor).

Budget Transfers:

Information distributed prior to the meeting. Mr. Paradise presented the following budget transfer for Board approval:

The Board approved the Budget Transfer Report No. 09-4 (Working Copy) with six transactions by a vote of eight ayes and one nay (Mr. O’Connor).

BID: 10-10 Email Archive Equipment

Bid: \$36,125.00

Bid Description: Email archiving system needed in order to comply with new Right To Know law as it relates to storage, archival and retrieval of all district email.

Mr. Eccles questioned whether this was absolutely necessary at this time. Mr. Paradise advised that it is necessary in order to comply with the US Supreme Court decision which requires that the district provide an

easy way to document old emails. Mr. Paradise advised that 80% of information in litigation these days is in electronic form. It is the recommendation of the Administration to comply with same.

Mr. Profy stated that the time period mandated by the Supreme Court is that whatever your document retention schedule is for hard copy paper documents you must also maintain the email and other electronic form of record keeping for the same period of time. Per Capita and Real estate tax information is maintained for seven years. Likewise a document which would be retained for four years if it were in hard paper form then the electronic or email form would need to be retained for four years.

Mr. Koziol forwarded an email to other board members and would like the district to look into the matter further to see whether there are other inexpensive ways to accomplish this task. There are other districts utilizing other methods. Mr. Koziol would like the Board to continue research and wait another month after further research. Mr. Paradise is recommending that the Board proceed.

Mr. Koziol made a motion to separate Bid 10-10 Email Archive Equipment from the remainder of the report provided. Mr. Eccles seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Mr. Webb made a motion to approve Bid 10-10 Email Archive Equipment as presented. Dr. Spitz seconded the motion.

Mr. Blasch inquired whether the only reason to hold off was to see if a better price was available. Mr. Paradise advised that this is the least expensive way that the district has found to comply with the Supreme Court ruling and still be in compliance and easily index and access what is stored. Access could be significant and possibly will need to be easily accessible. Mr. Paradise advised that the information storage could assist the district in defense of lawsuits, etc.

Mr. Koziol would like the district to consider other ways of assisting in the storage of electronic/email information.

Dr. Spitz questioned when would the bid expire. Mr. Paradise advised that the bid was opened January 20th and the district has another month to make a decision. If the Board wants to accept this solution then it would make sense to accept this bid. This does not need to be tonight, it can be a month from now.

Mr. Koziol advised that it could be possible to find a less expensive way to proceed in the upcoming month.

Mr. O'Connor made a motion to table Bid 10-10 to further research said matter. Mr. Blasch seconded same.

The Board unanimously approved the motion to table.

Certified and Support Personnel Reports

Dr. Muenker presented the following for approval:

- Elections of Certified Personnel
- Resignations/Leaves of Certified Personnel
- Elections of Support Personnel
- Resignations/Leaves of Support Personnel
- 2008/2009 Recommended Extra-Curricular Staff and Salaries

Dr. Muenker pointed out that Human Resources has added 14 employees to the day to day substitute list for the support staff.

Dr. Muenker advised that a Revised Addendum for Page 72 has been distributed to Board members which has been labeled Addendum A and Addendum B.

Dr. Muenker recommended the approval of the personnel report for certified and support personnel along with Addendum A and Addendum B.

Mr. Webb made a motion to approve the Personnel reports as presented by Dr. Muenker with the exception of Addendum A and Addendum B which will be handled separately. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion.

Mr. Eccles inquired regarding the Extra Curricular staff and salaries in relation to the upcoming budget. Dr. Spitz suggested that this position is for completion of the current budget year.

The Board unanimously approved said personnel report.

Mr. Webb made a motion to approve Addendum A which is the approval of a salary adjustment for the Acting Superintendent. Mr. Koziol seconded the motion.

The Board approved said motion by a vote of eight ayes and one abstention (Mr. Blasch).

Mr. Webb made a motion to approve Addendum B which is an employment contract extension with the Business Administrator. Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was requested. The roll call tally indicated that the motion passed by a vote of six ayes (Ms. Boyle, Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Eccles, Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. Koziol and Mr. Webb) and two nays (Mr. O'Connor, Dr. Spitz) one abstention (Mr. Blasch).

Motion: Acceptance of 2007-08 Audit Report

Ms. Boyle presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the audit for the Neshaminy School District for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2008, has been prepared by Maillie, Faconiero & Company, LLP.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Audit Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2008, be accepted in accordance with Section 24-2408 of the School Code.

Mr. Eccles seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: Intermediate Unit #22 - 2009-2010 Budget

Mrs. Cummings presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy School District is one of the thirteen school Districts in Bucks County that utilizes the services of the Bucks County Intermediate Unite No. 22; and

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy School District contributed to the support of the Bucks County Intermediate Unit; and

WHEREAS, the School Code requires that the Intermediate Unit budget be presented and acted upon by the Board of School Directors;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approves the Bucks County Intermediate Unit Program and Services and Instructional Materials Budget for 2009-2010 in the amount of \$1,932,000 with our District share to be \$105,573.

Dr. Spitz seconded same.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: Revision of Policies #536 and #553

Mr. Eccles presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, in order to keep District Board Policies updated and current, new policies and revisions 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 536 - Administration of Medication

Revised Policy 553 – Bullying/Cyberbullying

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approve the revised Policies as recommended by the School Board Policies Committee.

Mr. Koziol seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Dr. Muenker advised that a Facilities and Finance Meeting will take place tomorrow night, Wednesday, February 25th.

Update: Board Strategic Action Committee Meetings

Dr. Muenker advised that a meeting will be held on March 2, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room.

Federal Programs

Dr. Muenker advised that the total of \$2.4M is currently in the federal programs grant fund.

Other Board Business

Mr. O'Connor suggested that Neshaminy T.V. be made available to any candidates who would be running for school board positions in the upcoming elections.

There was Board consensus to send said suggestion to Board Policies for further review and what format could be followed.

Public Comment

None.

Board Comment

Mr. O'Connor stated that the FAME production was excellent and congratulated the entire cast and staff for a wonderful production.

Mr. Koutsouradis stated that the Beauty and Beast production at Poquessing was fabulous and congratulated the entire cast and staff for a job well done.

Mr. Blasch received phone calls regarding inequities as to the ticket distribution for Gym Night. If same is true what is being done to remedy the matter.

Dr. Muenker stated that the matter is being addressed as quickly and fairly as possible.

Mr. Webb thanked all Board members for the amount of time and effort expended in the past several weeks.

Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. O'Connor moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Blasch seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls
Board Secretary