

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
April 20, 2010

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on April 20, 2010, 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
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise
Mrs. Patricia Boylan
Dr. Geeta Heble
Mr. Kevin Kane
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan

BOARD MEMBER ABSENT:

OTHERS: Approximately 350 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Jennifer Burns

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, IV, Esquire

Mr. Webb announced that prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held from 6:30 p.m. to 7:10 p.m. where personnel and legal issues were discussed.

Call to Order

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Announcements

None

Board Recognition

Mr. Paradise presented the following awards:

- Mr. Paul Minotti – PASBO's 2010 Gold AWARD of Excellence in School Facilities
- Facilities Awards – United States EPA Energy Star Award for Everitt Elementary School and Buck Elementary School

Mr. Webb stated that the Board will not be voting on the Strike Free Education Act at this time.

Public Comment

Joe McFadden, member of the Lower Southampton Fire Department and the Bucks County Dive Rescue Task Force addressed the Board about the importance of keeping the pools at Carl Sandburg Middle School and Poquessing Middle School open. Mr. McFadden declared that the pools likely prevent potential drownings and water injuries because they serve a valuable purpose in instructing the public about water safety. Mr. McFadden also mentioned that the pools are not only important to the public, but that the task force also uses the pools for water rescue training.

Cyndie and Gracie Bowman, teacher and swimming coach from Feasterville stated that her daughter, Gracie, is a representative of the students that would be impacted if the Poquessing and Carl Sandburg pools are closed.

Ms. Bowman listed the many organizations that utilize the pools and she stated that she feels that the pools serve a valuable purpose to the community. Five year old Gracie Bowman ended her mother's comments by declaring that she loves her pool.

Joanne Davis, Langhorne, PA, stated that she would like to reiterate the previous comments regarding the closing of two of the township pools. She mentioned that swimming is a lifelong activity and it can have a positive effect on preventing childhood obesity and she implored the Board to keep the pools open.

Victoria Giannini, Neshaminy student asked the Board to reconsider any intention to close the Neshaminy pools.

Michelle Kaisinger, property manager, Langhorne, PA, said that the Neshaminy pools are a big part of her family and many other families in the district. Ms. Kaisinger pointed out that swimming is the only sport that is repeatedly threatened year after year as a means to cutting the budget. Ms. Kaisinger stated that the swim team works very hard and deserves respect. She pleaded with the Board to keep the pools open.

Emily Faust, Neshaminy High School student from Hulmeville, stated that she feels that the Instrumental Music Program helps students to achieve higher test scores, be more creative and practice time management skills. She asked the Board not to cut such an important program in order to save money.

Mark Stanford, Langhorne, PA, stated that the Instrumental Music Program is a serious scholastic and co-curricular program that enriches students physically, through marching bands, as well as mentally and creatively. He stated that the program teaches dedication and gives students a positive purpose.

Raymond Keown, head swim coach for NRG Swimming, Levittown, PA, noted that the swimming program is very important to the community. Mr. Keown urged the Board to consider the impact that the pools have on the community and to not cut the swim program because it would have a negative effect on students in the district.

Abby Miller, Neshaminy High School student, Levittown, PA, stated that she is a member of the Neshaminy High School Swim Team. Ms. Miller noted that the swim team is like a family that helps to mold the members into responsible adults. She said that taking away the swim program would weaken the team spirit that has evolved over the years.

Sean Robinson, Senior at Neshaminy High School, Feasterville, PA, commented that the Neshaminy swim team means so much to the team members and they do not want to see it cut. Mr. Robinson credits his membership on the swim team with helping him to get a scholarship to college.

Elaine Robinson, a nurse practitioner at St. Mary Medical Center, Feasterville, PA, declared her support for the Neshaminy swim team and reiterated that the program means a lot to the community.

Brad Johnson, Neshaminy High School student, Langhorne, PA, stated that the pools in the district are superior to other swimming pools in the area. Mr. Johnson mentioned that being on the swim team has helped him with a medical condition and he reiterated the importance of keeping the pools open.

Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, opened his comments by asking the Board to never increase class size and to vote on making classes smaller. He added that the Board not remove any programs that appear on the list of ideas to cut the budget. He further stated that he feels that the Board should expect to increase the tax rate by 2.9 percent that is allowed by the state. Mr. Rodos once again stated that he feels the Board must stop the yearly talk of eliminating programs and consider what is best for the children who are not represented at the bargaining table. Mr. Rodos further urged the Board and the teacher's union to return to the bargaining table.

Joe Caruso, maintenance man, Langhorne, PA, stated that he, as well as many other members of the community, uses the pools for a number of programs. Mr. Caruso also stated that the pools are used for training purposes as well.

Natalie Caruso, Neshaminy High School student, Langhorne, PA, described the benefits that the swimming program offers and she asked the Board to keep the pools open.

Cynthia Holder, Neshaminy High School student, advised the Board that she also is on the Neshaminy swim team and explained that the swimming program is very important to her and she does not want to see the pools closed.

Mindy Anderson, President of Neshaminy Support Staff Association, Levittown, PA, thanked everyone for their comments and support to keep the Neshaminy Middle School's pools open. Ms. Anderson stated that the members of NESPA look forward to working towards an agreement with the Board that is fair and proportionate to their earnings. Ms. Anderson stated that the support staff always has the welfare of the children in mind.

Tatiana Shekhtimm, Langhorne, PA, stated that she educates children on physical education. Ms. Shekhtimm mentioned that the swimming program plays an important part in fighting childhood obesity and asks the Board to reconsider closing the pools.

Student Representative Report

Student Representatives were not in attendance.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Muenker advised the Board on the following:

- Pearl Buck Elementary School won first place in the Bucks County Courier Times Newspaper in education design.
- Neshaminy High School students placed third in the Lifesmart State Competition.
- Neshaminy High School Student, Nick Patruskey won "Best of Show" prize in the 15th annual Bucks County High School Art Exhibition.
- The Neshaminy High school Music Department congratulated Mark Eisen and Dan O'Neill on being selected to the Pennsylvania Music Educators All-State Music Festival.
- Neshaminy High School had eighteen students attend the Future Business Leaders of America State Competition in Hershey, Pennsylvania.
- The Future Problem Solving State Competition was held in Camp Hill, PA, on April 16th and 17th. Congratulations went out to all the winners.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Burns presented the minutes of the March 23, 2010, Public Board Meeting. Upon motion of Mr. O'Connor and seconded by Mrs. Cummings the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the March 23, 2010, Public Board Meeting.

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

Mr. Paradise presented the following for approval:

- March, 2010 Treasurer's Report, subject to audit
- Check Register - March, 2010
- Budget Transfer Report 10-5
- Investment summary
- Personal and per capita tax exonerations for March, 2010

Mr. Eccles moved the March, 2010 Treasurer's Report be approved, subject to audit, Check Register for March, 2010, Budget Transfer Report 10-5, Investment Summary, and the Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations for March, 2010 be approved. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion.

Mr. Eccles inquired what the rate of interest was on the investment of 5 million dollars.

Mr. Paradise responded .55%.

The motion passed with a vote of 8 ayes, and 1 abstention (Mr. Congdon).

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 – Support Personnel
- Extra-Curricular Report

Dr. Muenker recommended the approval of the Personnel Report for Certified and Support Personnel and the Extra-Curricular Report.

Mrs. Cummings moved that the Certified and Support Personnel Reports and the Extra-Curricular Report be approved. Mr. Eccles seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said reports.

Motion: Summer School Programs for 2010

Mrs. Cummings presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy School District has operated a successful summer school program for 52 consecutive years; and

WHEREAS, in recent years has operated completely on a self-sustaining basis via student tuitions; and

WHEREAS, the following programs have been discussed with the Neshaminy Board of School Directors:

Secondary Summer School (Enrichment and Make-up)

Summer Fine Arts including Art, Instrumental Music, and Summer Stock

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approves the request to operate summer programs for the 53rd year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that students residing in Neshaminy School District be given first preference for program involvement and related program activities.

Mr. Congdon seconded the motion.

Mr. Webb asked if the expenses were self-supporting.

Mr. Paradise responded they were 100% self-supporting.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: Approval of Special Education Contracted Services for 2010 -2011

Mr. Oettinger presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy School District is required by law to provide special education and related services to children from pre-school through age twenty-one; and

WHEREAS, a significant number of our students have severe mental and physical disabilities for which we do not operate programs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approves the contract for special education services with Bucks County Intermediate Unit 22 for the 2010 - 11 school year.

Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

Mr. Webb stated that after the Board previously turned down the proposal of 7.9 million dollars by the Bucks County Intermediate Unit, the Unit made a promise to lower their cost; however, there has been no resolution to date.

Mr. Webb requested a roll call tally. The roll call tally indicated the motion passed by a vote of 6 ayes, (Ms. Boyle, Mr. Congdon, Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. Oettinger), and 3 nays, (Mr. Eccles, Mr. Morris, and Mr. Webb.)

Motion: Approval of the 2010 – 2011 Technical High School Budget

Ms. Boyle presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, in order to provide technical high school education for our students, six Lower Bucks County School Districts cooperatively established the Bucks County Technical High school; and

WHEREAS, each participating school district must annually approve the Technical High School's annual budget.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approves the 2010-11 Bucks County Technical High School Budget in the total amount of \$22,737,376 with the Neshaminy School District 2010-11 net fiscal payment to be \$4,035,712.

Mr. Congdon seconded the motion.

Mr. Eccles remarked that last year 14 million dollars was cut from the budget as well as 65 positions. Mr. Eccles said that since there are 15 less students this year along with the budget cuts from last year, he does not approve of an increase in the technical school budget.

Mr. O'Connor added that there are 15 less students this year and approximately 100 less over the last four years, so this may indicate an opportunity to reduce staff. He also said that he is in agreement with Mr. Eccles and would most likely not support an increase in the tech school budget at this time. Additionally, Mr. O'Connor commended Mr. Koutsouradis for his hard work and efforts on the committee with the tech school. Mr. O'Connor also questioned if the formula that is used to arrive at the numbers has ever been re-evaluated.

Mr. Koutsouradis replied that it has been discussed, but no change has been made to date. Mr. Koutsouradis declared that he cut the academic allocations by 18 percent, and he cut 10 percent on the tech school side. He explained that one of the major increases is due to health insurance and another increase is due to

attorney fees for the negotiations with teachers. Mr. Koutsouradis stated that at this time the tech school program cannot lose any teacher positions, but that is something that can be revisited next year.

Mr. Eccles stated that the tech school has hired a consultant to review the formula.

Mr. O'Connor remarked that he is concerned that the technical school staff may not be doing their fair share in the negotiations to reduce the tech school budget.

Ms. Boyle mentioned that when she was a member of the committee a few years ago she had asked the finance director for an explanation of the formula and was never provided with a satisfactory answer.

Mr. Morris thanked Mr. Koutsouradis for his hard work on the committee, but also stated that he cannot support the proposal until a satisfactory explanation is given regarding the increase.

Mr. Webb noted that the increase is 114 thousand dollars over the last year and the employee count has remained the same.

Ms. Boyle added that it is 114 thousand dollars more with fewer students.

Mr. Webb requested a roll call tally. The roll call indicated the motion failed by a vote of 3 ayes, (Mr. Congdon, Mrs. Cummings, and Mr. Koutsouradis), and 6 nays, (Ms. Boyle, Mr. Eccles, Mr. Morris, Mr. O'Connor, Mr. Oettinger, and Mr. Webb.)

Motion: Approval of Binswanger Contract Extension

Mr. Congdon presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy Board of School Directors officially closed the Neshaminy Middle School as of June 20, 2008; and

WHEREAS, the facility is now only rented on a small scale; and

WHEREAS, the school district needs to maximize alternative sources of revenue in order to keep real estate taxes as low as possible and to provide the best possible use of the facility.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors authorizes the extension of an Exclusive Agency Agreement with Binswanger of Pennsylvania and authorize the Business Administrator to execute that extension agreement upon review of the Solicitor.

Mr. Eccles seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Federal Programs

Dr. Muenker advised the Board on two additional grants; the Middle State Tennis Grant for \$600.00 and the Classrooms for the Future Grant for \$25,000. The total amount for grants for the fiscal year is \$2,239,784.00.

Other Board Business

Mr. O'Connor inquired if there has been any update regarding the healthcare increase.

Dr. Muenker replied that a letter has been received and the broker has assured him that they are indeed working to reduce the 19 percent increase. He also stated that they will have further information at the May 4th meeting.

Mr. O'Connor mentioned that it is important for the Board to encourage the new broker to reduce the 19 percent increase.

Dr. Muenker replied that the next report should come within several weeks.

Public Comment

Mr. Larry Pastor, Business Executive and Chair of Taxpayers for a Fair Neshaminy Budget, Langhorne, PA, opened his comments by expressing his disappointment that the Board did not vote on the House Bill Resolution banning teacher's strikes. Mr. Pastor voiced his approval of the parents, students, and coaches that spoke during public comments in support of the swimming program and the instrumental music program. Mr. Pastor took exception to a previous statement during public comment regarding the representation of Neshaminy students. Mr. Pastor declared that the students are indeed represented by the members of the School Board. He also commented that the Board only has so many choices to reduce the budget. He explained that there are limited amount of funds to be gained by raising taxes. Accordingly, another choice is to cut academic programs, which is an unpopular choice for students, parents, and taxpayers because of Neshaminy's excellent reputation as a quality school district. Mr. Pastor said the third choice would be concessions from labor and he urged the School Board to carefully consider that option.

Board Comment

Mr. O'Connor stated that the current deficit is 7.68 million dollars and under the State Mandated Act I Inflationary Limit the Board is only allowed to increase 3.36 million dollars, which means by law the Board must reduce the deficit by 4.3 million dollars. Mr. O'Connor went on to explain that the Board has a very difficult task ahead especially since no one wants to see programs cut or jobs lost. Mr. O'Connor encouraged the public to continue to attend the meetings in an effort to assist the Board with an equitable resolution.

Mr. Morris reiterated that all the Board members represent the children. Mr. Morris confirmed that almost 80% of the budget is for labor contracts.

Mr. Webb clarified that the budget that Mr. Paradise referred to was not the final budget. The final budget will not be completed until the middle of June.

Mr. Paradise stated that the costs of the pools are not self sufficient, but the community aquatics is self sufficient and earns some money for the school district.

Adjournment

Mr. O'Connor moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Congdon seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Burns
Board Secretary