

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
November 9, 2011

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on Wednesday, November 9, 2011 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  
Mr. Scott E. 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. Barbara Markowitz  
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan  
Dr. Geeta Heble  
Mr. Anthony Devlin  
Mrs. Theresa Hinterberger

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Ms. Irene Boyle

**OTHERS:** Approximately 75 persons from the public, staff and press

**SECRETARY:** Mrs. Jennifer Burns

**SOLICITOR:** Thomas J. Profy, IV, Esquire

\*Mrs. Susan Cummings arrived at 7:27 p.m.

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Mr. Webb stated that prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held which Personnel issues were discussed.

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**3. Announcements**

None

**4. Superintendent's Report**

**a) PSBA Recognition of Service**

Mr. Mark Miller, Vice President Elect for the Pennsylvania School Board Association, presented a plaque for outstanding service to education to Mr. Eccles for his twelve years of service and Mr. Webb and Mrs. Cummings for their eight years of service to the Neshaminy School District.

**b) PSSA Presentation**

Dr. Heble stated that a power point presentation on the path to student achievement would include an overview of:

- District efforts to date
- Recommendations including achieving a "proficient level on state or local assessments" as a graduation requirement
- Program data
- Conclusions for current and future efforts

Dr. Rattigan presented the K- 12 level, Mr. Devlin presented the middle school level, and Dr. McGee presented the high school level.

Dr. Rattigan outlined the conclusions for current and future efforts:

- All students can learn.
- Growth for every student is our goal.
- There is not one magic solution to achieve this goal.
- Neshaminy student's achievement is everyone's responsibility.
- Working together for this common goal is critical.

(The full PSSA Presentation can be found on Neshaminy's website.)

**Questions regarding the PSSA presentation:**

Mr. O'Connor asked Dr. Heble if the additional professional development would be funded by current funds within the budget.

Dr. Heble stated that currently they are funded within the budget.

Mr. O'Connor asked Dr. Heble if the walk-through by administration was lacking at this time.

Dr. Heble responded that the recommendation was to increase the frequency and consistency.

Mr. O'Connor asked Dr. McGee if he could elaborate on the statement that more support is needed for the high school similar to other buildings.

Dr. McGee stated that he was referring to specialists, such as reading and math tutors, which will help the high school to improve their testing results.

Mr. O'Connor said he supports the concept, but noted that this Board and future Boards, will have to keep in mind the need for the funding at budget time.

Mr. Morris remarked that he had hoped that the matter of teachers earning additional pay above their regular salary for extra-curricular activities would be addressed.

Dr. McGee responded that it is reviewed each year and when necessary some positions are eliminated, but it is a challenging endeavor in order to maintain equality and success of the programs.

Mrs. Cummings asked if proper arrangements have been made for the students to prepare and test for graduation requirements.

Dr. McGee replied that the matter has been reviewed and he verified that the appropriate accommodations are available.

Mrs. Cummings asked if there is any correlation between students coming into the district and students who have been in the district as far as scores.

Dr. McGee stated that a 2006 data revealed that students leaving the district were proficient and advanced and students coming in were not as proficient.

Dr. Muenker asked the Board for their consensus regarding the concept of PSSA tests as a requirement for graduation.

There was Board consensus regarding the concept of PSSA tests as a requirement for graduation. (Ms. Boyle was not present.)

**Dr. Muenker advised the Board on the following:**

- NHS Drama Department will be presenting “Copies.” It will take place at the Black Box Theatre, November, 16 – 18<sup>th</sup>, at 7 p.m.
- NHS’s Interact Club reported that their October activities were very successful.
- Maple Point’s Family & Consumer Science Students Collect Money for UNICEF while Trick-or-Treating.
- 19th Annual Neshaminy High School Kaleidoscope of Bands will be held on Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, at 7 p.m.
- The NFT participated in an annual small walk for cancer at the Oxford Valley Mall on October 29<sup>th</sup>, and donated \$700.
- Fifth grade student, Shane Hanson Ashworth, along with students and staff from Ferderbar Elementary School raised \$1,000 for Breast Cancer Awareness.
- Samuel Everitt Elementary School Veteran’s Day Food Drive to Benefit “Food4Troops.”
- Oliver Heckman students raised over \$400 and donated it to the Penndel Food Bank. They are also sponsoring a holiday season food and coat drive, beginning November 1, 2011.
- Neshaminy High School’s Family & Consumer Science Majors visit the residents of Attleboro Nursing Home.
- 2011 Senior Citizens Tax Assistance Program.
- Congratulations to Neshaminy football team for defeating Pennsbury 24 to 7. Playoffs begin Friday, November 11<sup>th</sup>.

**5. Public Comment**

Louise Boyd, NFT President, teacher at Neshaminy High School, Furlong, stated that the NFT has offered six counter proposals to date, which includes millions of dollars in concessions. Ms. Boyd remarked that the members of her union have had a pay freeze since 2008 and have felt a profound effect of the recession and yet they have made compromises on various issues. She stated that she feels that the district can find a way to compromise with teachers on a reasonable contract. Ms. Boyd said that aside from monetary issues, the NFT wants certified staff to have an equal voice and input on the education decisions. Ms. Boyd said the members of the union are passionate and care deeply about the children in the Neshaminy school system. She concluded by proclaiming to the Board that December 6<sup>th</sup> is their opportunity to resolve the conflict.

Angie Manning, teacher in New Jersey, Langhorne, thanked Mr. O’Connor for his help and hard work regarding educational technology in elementary schools.

Stephen Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, advised the Board and the public to watch a program on CNN entitled Fixing Education. He said it contained some excellent ideas on ways to improve the Neshaminy educational system. Mr. Pirritano said that he hopes the concepts outlined tonight will move forward towards an enhanced curriculum. He also said the NFT leadership is doing a disservice to their junior members by not settling the contract.

Charles Alfonso, semi-retired, Langhorne, said he would like to see the NFT agree to televise the negotiation meetings as the public has been requesting for the past several months. Mr. Alfonso said he has a tremendous amount of respect for Dr. McGee; however, he is not in favor of making PSSA tests a graduation requirement for students. He said that he feels that the students are at a disadvantage because they have not been getting the quality of education that would be needed to score proficiently in the tests.

**6. Items for Approval Tonight**

**a) Personnel Report**

Dr. Muenker asked for the Boards approval for the appointment of Michael Rodriguez as Principal at Herbert Hoover Elementary School.

Mr. O'Connor moved that the personnel report be approved and Mr. Congdon seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said report.

**b) Overnight Trips**

Dr. Rattigan presented the following trips for approval:

1. December 15 - 17, 2011 - Neshaminy High School - King of the Mountain Varsity High School Wrestling Tournament - Central Mountain High School, Mill Hall, PA.
2. December 28 - 29, 2011 - Neshaminy High School - Governor Mifflin Holiday Varsity High School Wrestling Tournament - Governor Mifflin Intermediate, Shillington, PA.
3. January 6 - 7, 2012 - Neshaminy High School - Dallastown Area High School Round Robin Varsity High School Wrestling Tournament - Dallastown, PA.
4. May 1 - 6, 2012 - Neshaminy High School Vocal Music Adjudication - London/Paris.
5. May 5 - 7, 2012 - Neshaminy High School Junior Class Trip Kings Dominion, Colonial Williamsburg, Baltimore Inner Harbor of Washington, D.C.
6. March 23 - 30, 2012 - Neshaminy High School Future Problem Solvers and Neshaminy High School A.E. trip to Ireland and Scotland.

Mr. Webb stated there is no cost to the taxpayers.

Mr. Congdon requested if a list of chaperones be provided to the Board.

Mr. Eccles asked if arrangements are being made for participants who cannot afford the \$2,200 for the trip Ireland/Scotland.

Mr. Pimble stated that students have the opportunity to fundraise independently and also since the trip isn't until 2013, the parents have the opportunity to pay monthly installments.

Mr. O'Connor asked if all the trips needed approval tonight.

Mr. Pimble stated that it would be advantageous because it would give parents more time to pay for the trip and another benefit is that if enough members are enrolled by the end of December the Tour Company gives a rebate of \$2,000, which is used for social events and other expenses.

Mr. O'Connor asked when the adjudication occurs.

Ms. Nichols stated that a college professor gives adjudication and a clinic onboard the ship.

Mr. O'Connor suggested that at least one full meeting occur in between requests to answer questions anyone might have.

Mrs. Cummings asked if there were a minimum number of students required to participate in the Future Problem Solvers/NHS A.E. trip.

Mr. Pimble stated there is not, but typically it has been a personalized trip.

Mrs. Cummings asked who the three additional chaperones will be.

Mr. Pimble stated that the three additional chaperones will be determined by Dr. Muenker.

Mr. Eccles asked how many students are involved with the Future Problem Solvers.

Mr. Pimble responded approximately 40 students are in the Future Problem Solvers Club. He also added that any A.E. student who is in 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, or 11<sup>th</sup> grade during the 2011 - 2012 school year will be eligible to attend the trip.

Mr. Eccles asked if all the members of the club are going on this trip.

Mr. Pimble responded that because of financial reasons and other obligations not all students will attend.

The Board consensus was seven to one, (Mr. Eccles) for said trips. (Ms. Boyle was not present.)

**7. Items for Approval at the November 22, 2011 Public Board Meeting**

**a) Private Transportation Contract for 2011**

Mrs. Markowitz advised that the private transportation contract for Lakeside Youth Services is for six students at \$60.10 per day for an estimated yearly cost of \$64,908.00. Mrs. Markowitz stated that the Board will be asked to approve the private transportation contract for 2011 - 2012 at the November 22, Public Meeting.

**b) Bids/Budget Transfers**

Mrs. Markowitz advised that there were no bids and one Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy - 12-1) for funds needed to maintain AV equipment for Board Meetings in the amount of \$8,100.

Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy - 12-1) will be presented at the November 22, 2011 Public Meeting for approval.

**8. Committee Reports**

**a) Board Policies**

Mrs. Cumming advised the Board that at the last meeting graduation requirements were discussed and also cell phone usage. The next meeting is scheduled for November 30<sup>th</sup>, at 5:15 p.m., and discussions will include increasing credits for graduation.

**b) Educational Development**

Mr. O'Connor informed the Board that at the last meeting PSSA's were discussed. The next meeting is scheduled for November 14<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 p.m.

**c) Finance/Facilities**

Mr. Webb advised the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for November 29<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m. and they will be reviewing bonds.

**d) IU Board**

Mr. Eccles stated there was nothing new to report.

**e) Education Foundation**

Dr. Muenker informed the Board the next meeting is scheduled for December 12<sup>th</sup>, at 4:00 p.m.

**f) Technical School**

Mr. Koutsouradis advised the Board that at the last meeting the Board voted down the removal of the exploratory program and also the Principal, Ms. Connie Rinker, is hoping to have a Board policy written in the upcoming year that will push the students to be proficient and have it tied in with their graduation requirements.

**g) Technology**

Mr. O'Connor stated that there was nothing new to report.

**h) Ad Hoc Facility Use Update**

Mr. O'Connor announced to the Board that at the October meeting two options were discussed, one was to close an elementary school and the other one was to close an elementary and a middle school. At this time the committee wasn't comfortable with option two due to the fact that crowding in the two remaining schools could cause a problem.

**9. Public Comment**

Stephen Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, stated that on Mr. Eccles suggestion he did go through past School Board minutes to find the answers to his questions. He said that he and others who researched through the minutes could find no evidence that the Neshaminy voluntary early retirement plan was ever discussed at a public meeting. He stated that yet another letter was discovered from Dr. Gary Bowman to Mr. Kevin Knowles dated 5/31/2001. Mr. Pirritano voiced his dismay that several letters exist regarding this matter and all have different language. Mr. Pirritano said that there continues to be unanswered questions regarding the deal made by the 2001 School Board and the NFT.

Charles Alfonso, semi-retired, Langhorne, continued the discussion on behalf of Mr. Pirritano regarding the questions about the side-bar letter of 2001. He stated that an article from the Bucks County Courier Times presents evidence that members of the public were opposed to the 2001 teacher's contract and came out to protest at the public meeting contrary to what Mr. Eccles has stated was his recollection. In spite of the public disapproval at that time, the former School Board voted to consent to the contract. He added that nothing was found in the public record of the 2001 Neshaminy voluntary early retirement plan. On his own behalf, Mr. Alfonso asked the Board why there would be a need to offer remedial courses to students to prepare for the PSSA's. He said that students who have progressed to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level should already be equipped academically for the testing.

Mandi Leap, Neshaminy parent, Langhorne expressed her disgust and outrage over NFT members who picketed outside Albert Schweitzer Elementary and Carl Sandburg Middle Schools on November 7, 2011. Ms. Leap questioned the judgment of teachers who would target children for their own agendas. She said teachers have the right to picket functions that are intended for adults only, but by picketing schools during daytime hours when only children are nearby and very few parents are even present is contemptible. She declared that the NFT is greedy, unethical and without shame.

**10. Future Topics**

None

**11. Agenda Development for the November 22, 2011 Public Board Meeting**

None

**12. Other Board Business**

Mrs. Cummings asked Mr. Minotti to comment on the present condition of the high school after recent reports of problems with leaks.

Mr. Minotti stated that some minor leaks have been dealt with, but there are no major concerns.

Mr. O'Connor stated that while the NFT has made counter proposals, the district is still unable to agree to these proposals because they simply do not have the money. He said that another important matter is the impact of the cost increase for PSERS. Mr. O'Connor declared that of course teachers should be an integral part of the educational development process; however, as in all businesses, administrators must certainly have the final decision. Mr. O'Connor said that he is in agreement with Ms. Leap that teachers who picket the schools during school hours in front of young children are a despicable act.

Mr. Koutsouradis said he would like to see the questions regarding the Neshaminy voluntary early retirement plan answered and if Mr. Eccles could provide any information to Mr. Pirritano, it would help to bring closure to the entire matter.

Mr. Congdon restated that the act of teachers picketing elementary/middle schools is wrong. He agreed with Mr. O'Connor's comments about the district not having the money to implement the NFT's proposals. He said he would rather see money spent on air conditioning for the schools in light of the fact that during the last school year, students were forced to forfeit several half days of education because of extreme temperatures.

Mr. Oettinger remarked that on Saturday, November 5, 2011 two Neshaminy teachers came to his house to hand out a flyer with NFT propaganda. He said that after receiving the flyer many of his neighbors came to him to reinforce their support for his position and that of the School Board.

Mr. Webb stated that his definition of a concession does not conform to what the NFT considers a concession. He said when a proposal makes the district's costs go up, that is not a concession. He remarked that if the Board is to hold an administrator accountable, then the administrator must have the final say in any decision making process. Mr. Webb concluded by stating that the Board intends to have a presentation at the next public meeting outlining what the true cost would be with the NFT's latest proposal. He said he is looking forward to negotiating a fair and affordable contract at the meeting on December 6, 2011 and the information will be shared at the next public meeting.

**13. Adjournment of Meeting**

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 9:32 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Jennifer Burns  
Board Secretary