

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
May 7, 2013

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on May 7, 2013 in the District Offices Board Room at Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Ritchie Webb, President
Mr. Scott E. Congdon, Vice President
Ms. Irene Boyle
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis
Mr. Mike Morris
Mr. Anthony Sposato

ADMINISTRATORS:

Mr. Robert L. Copeland
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan
Mrs. Barbara Markowitz
Dr. Geeta Heble
Mr. Anthony Devlin
Mrs. Theresa Hinterberger

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. William Oettinger
Mr. Mark Shubin

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

SECRETARY: Mrs. Jennifer Burns

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, IV, Esquire
Charles N. Sweet, Esquire

1. Call to Order

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

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

3. Announcements

Prior to the Public Work Session Meeting, the annual Neshaminy Employee Recognition Program was held.

Recognition Awards - The annual Neshaminy Employee Recognition Program, which was held prior to the Public Board Meeting (Work Session), included the Neshaminy High School Select Choir, under the direction of Mrs. Kristin Nichols, performing several musical selections. The following long term service awards were presented to certified and support staff members for 15, 20, 25, 30, and 35 years of service. Also invited were the retirees for the 2012 - 2013 school year.

15 Years of Service - Employees received a ceramic box inscribed with the Neshaminy School District seal. Twenty eight employees have completed 15 years of service.

20 Years of Service - Employees received a gold filled lapel pin inscribed with the Neshaminy seal. Sixty nine employees have completed 20 years of service.

25 Years of Service - Employees received a 6" silver plated bowl engraved with their name. Twenty five employees have completed 25 years of service.

30 Years of Service - Employees received a brass hand bell engraved with their name. Eight employees have completed 30 years of service.

35 Years of Service - Employee received a 10" silver plated bowl engraved with their name. One employee has completed 35 years of service.

40 Years of Service - Employee received a crystal apple on a pedestal engraved with their name. One employee completed 40 years of service.

Retirees for the 2012 – 2013 school year – Employees received a cloisonné pin with the Neshaminy Seal. The forty three retirees were certified and support staff members.

Forty-one of the one-hundred thirty-two long-term service award recipients attended the Neshaminy Employee Recognition Program. Ten of the forty three retirees attended.

Mr. Webb read the following statement:

It has been a while since you have heard anything about negotiations with the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers, so I wanted to bring you up-to-date where things stand.

Our last official negotiation session, which was our 68th meeting thus far, took place nearly 3 months ago back on February 13th.

At that time, the Board restated its belief that its offer on the table was fair both in terms of its financial compensation and in its contractual language, and we encouraged union leaders to put that offer to a true vote before its membership.

Regrettably, such a vote has never occurred as NFT officials insisted that some of the language needed to be clarified or altered. The situation became even more complicated with the revelation that there was 201 MOU's out there that had become addendums to our teachers' contract, and of course, the concept of past practice arguably makes those MOU's binding today.

After a couple of months with no formal discussions between our two sides, both the NFT and Board decided to try something a little different. We agreed that NFT Vice President, Anne Schmidt and I would meet privately to discuss the issues that were hindering our negotiations.

Now before I go any further, let me stress that these meetings between Ms. Schmidt and me were conducted with the full knowledge of the Board's negotiation team. At no time was I empowered to act independently of the Board. For all intents and purposes, Ms. Schmidt and I were simply talking.

This isn't exactly a new tactic as we have had alternative style meetings in the past. On one occasion several years ago I met with the NFT president, Louise Boyd. And on other occasions, our attorneys met independently. Unfortunately those meetings did not yield any significant results, but then again we did not have a viable framework for an agreement on the table as we now have.

Ms. Schmidt and I have met a total of 4 times, most recently last night. The meetings have been civil and professional, and we have cleared a path for resolving some of the points of disagreement between our two sides such as student class size, and long term sub pool.

The NFT, through Ms. Schmidt, asked us to consider changes to the contract language which covered 38 clauses of the Board's proposal. In turn, we asked the NFT to revisit the list of 201 MOU's to assess which ones they deemed were absolutely essential.

After a thorough review with our solicitor and superintendent, we were prepared to accept changes to a little less than half of the 38 clauses that the NFT asked us to reconsider. Unfortunately when I reported this to Ms. Schmidt last night, she conveyed that the limit of our concessions was not acceptable by NFT standards, and that the Federation would make no further concessions. She strongly recommended that the Board accept ALL of the language changes requested by the union.

As far as the 201 MOU's are concerned, the NFT would only acknowledge that 89 of them were outdated, meaning that 112 of the remaining MOU's were deemed essential.

I had little choice at this point but to inform Ms. Schmidt that the Board could not accept all the contract language changes and the 112 MOU's that they demanded. Regrettably this brought an abrupt end to the talks between Ms. Schmidt and me. No further meetings have been scheduled.

I do want to acknowledge Anne Schmidt's efforts and willingness to speak with me these past few weeks, but ultimately it was the mountain of MOU's and the threat of past practice that doomed us.

Our offer remains on the table even though union leaders continue to deny their members a legitimate vote on the matter. Most of the financial issues have been settled. Virtually all the students-related issues, such as class size, have been worked out. What we cannot come to an agreement on is who is in charge of running this school district. The Board will not accept contract language that in any way compromises or diminishes the decision-making authority of our administration.

By our next public meeting on May 22nd, the Board will have withdrawn officially its offer for teacher's salary increases for the current school year, 2012/2013. Another years' worth of increases will have been lost forever. That is, unless officials from the NFT do the right thing by their people and allow a real vote on the Board's proposal.

If the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers doesn't accept our offer within the next two weeks, then unfortunately it appears likely that our impasse will extend into the next school year. So all any of us can do is continue to ask that our teachers be given a prompt vote by their union.

As always, we will continue to keep the public informed of any developments in the negotiations. And once again, on behalf of all 9 members of your Neshaminy School Board, I want to convey our sincere gratitude to the community for its overwhelming support during these difficult times.

Thank you.

4. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Copeland advised the Board on the following:

- Mr. Copeland gave a PowerPoint presentation on the 2013 - 2014 Proposed Final General Operating Budget

5. Public Comment

Kelly Macauley, teacher, residing in Langhorne, remarked that as a Family and Consumer Science teacher she sincerely hopes that the program is not cut at the middle school level, because the skills that are taught in the program are essential to the development of a successful adult future for students. She said that the program focuses on emergency technology, food science, family building, nutrition, child development, financial skills and community service.

Myrna DeAngelis, teacher, residing in Langhorne, stated that while the programs that are proposed to replace the Family and Consumer Science program are worthy subjects, they should not be implemented at the expense of cutting FCS. She said that FCS has evolved over the years to assist students transitioning from school to living on their own. Ms. DeAngelis remarked that the skills taught in FCS such as money management, forming quality relationships, parental responsibility, food preparation, and becoming productive citizens are relevant to developing students for the future.

Angie Manning, New Jersey school teacher, residing in Langhorne, suggested that members of the Board attend 3 scheduled meetings with the PTO's of the schools selected for closing. Ms. Manning said there are quite a few questions that need to be addressed by the Board and this would be the opportunity to do so. The meetings are scheduled at Samuel Everitt on May 20, 2013 at 7 p.m., Oliver Heckman on May 29, 2013 at 7 p.m., and Lower Southampton on May 30, 2013 at 7 p.m.

Ed Kern, retired, residing in Levittown, expressed his concern over the forethought of the school consolidation project. Mr. Kern stated the explanation given for the closing of several schools was due to decreased enrollment; however, replacing these schools with a bigger super school and expanding another school does not make sense in his opinion. He said this will change the face of and create inequality within the district. Mr. Kern wonders if the decision was politically based rather than a true financially responsible decision.

Stephen Pirritano, self-employed, residing in Feasterville, said he is confused by the NFT's refusal to accept the language that is within the proposed contract. He remarked that he does not understand what exactly is holding up the process on the NFT's side and what MOU's they are referring to. He asked for further information on what is causing the deadlock.

6. Items for Approval tonight

a) Approval of the 2013 - 2014 Proposed Final Budget

Motion: Approval of the 2013 - 2014 Proposed Final Budget

Mr. Webb read the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors did, on February 19, 2013, adopt the 2013-14 Preliminary Budget of the School District in accordance with Act 1 of 2006, and made same available for public inspection as required by law; and

WHEREAS, Section 687 of the Pennsylvania Public School Code requires that the Board of School Directors prepare a Proposed Final Budget at least thirty (30) days prior to the adoption of the Final Budget, and to make the Proposed Final Budget available for public inspection at least twenty (20) days prior to the date set for the adoption of the Final Budget; and

WHEREAS, Section 687 of the Pennsylvania Public School Code requires that the President of the Board of School Directors certify to the Pennsylvania Department of Education that the Proposed Final Budget was prepared, presented and made available for public inspection using the uniform form furnished by the Department of Education; and

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors has the 2013-14 Proposed Final Budget of the School District in the required form, and desire that same be made available for public inspection as required by law.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2013-14 Proposed Final Budget presented at this May 7, 2013 Public Meeting of the Board of School Directors be made available for public inspection, and be made available for duplication to any person on request, beginning on May 29, 2013, and that the President of the Board of School Directors is authorized to issue the certification to the Pennsylvania Department of Education required by Section 687 of the Pennsylvania Public School Code.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors will approve the 2013-14 Final Budget of the School District at a Public Meeting to be held on June 18, 2013 at Maple Point Middle School, District Offices/Board Room, 2250 Langhorne-Yardley Road, Langhorne, PA.

Mr. Congdon seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion by a vote of 6 ayes, and 0 nays. (Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Oettinger and Mr. Shubin were not present.)

b) Overnight Trips

Dr. Rattigan advised the Board on the following trip:

1. Sandburg Middle School to Future Problem Solving International Competition - University of Indiana, June 6 - 9, 2013

Mr. Webb made a motion to approve said trip.

Ms. Boyle seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion by a vote of 6 ayes, and 0 nays. (Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Oettinger and Mr. Shubin were not present.)

c) Approval of Bid #14 - 15 - Maple Point Rooftop Replacement of MZ-6 Unit

Mrs. Markowitz advised the Board on Bid No. 14-15.

Mr. Webb made a motion to approve Bid No. 14-15 - Maple Point Rooftop Replacement of MZ-6 Unit.

Mr. Sposato seconded the motion.

Mr. Morris asked if anyone did an evaluation on the energy consumption and the availability of the parts for this air conditioning system.

Mrs. Markowitz responded yes.

Mr. Morris asked if it is at the highest efficiency.

Mrs. Markowitz responded yes.

The Board unanimously approved said motion by a vote of 6 ayes, and 0 nays. (Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Oettinger and Mr. Shubin were not present.)

7. Items for Approval at the May 22 Public Board Meeting

a) Revised Board Policy #105

Dr. Rattigan advised the Board on Revised Board Policy #105 - Debate and Speaker's Time Limit.

Mr. Morris asked Dr. Rattigan to give an explanation of matters presented to be of a controversial nature.

Dr. Rattigan explained that it will be up to the Board President to decide or refer them to the proper committee or hold them for inclusion on the agenda of a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Webb stated that at the May 22, 2013 Public Board Meeting the above revised policy will be an agenda item.

b) Appointment of Treasurer

Mr. Webb stated that at the May 22, 2013 Public Board Meeting the Appointment of Treasurer will be an agenda item.

c) Appointment of Board Secretary and Assistant Board Secretary

Mr. Copeland stated he is recommending the current Board Secretary and Assistant Board Secretary.

Mr. Webb stated that at the May 22, 2013 Public Board Meeting the Appointment of Board Secretary and Assistant Board Secretary will be an agenda item.

d) 2013 - 14 Bucks County Technical High School Budget

Mr. Copeland stated that the representatives are recommending the approval of the proposed budget for the 2013 - 2014 Bucks County Technical High School.

Mr. Webb stated that at the May 22, 2013 Public Board Meeting the 2013 - 2014 Bucks County Technical High School Budget will be an agenda item.

e) Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22 Special Education Contracted Services for 2013 - 2014

Mr. Copeland stated that there will be a reduction in funding.

Mr. Webb stated that at the May 22, 2013 Public Board Meeting the Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22 Special Education contracted Services for 2013 - 2014 will be an agenda item.

f) Bids/budgets transfers

Mrs. Markowitz stated that there were two bids, Bid No. 14-01 and 14-05

Bid No. 14 -01

Bid Amount: \$28,195.68

Bid Description: Various general office supplies for use throughout the district for the school year 2013/2014.

Bid No. 14 - 05

Bid Amount: \$77,140.29

Bid Description: Various supplies for the maintenance of District vehicles for school year 2013/2014. Quantities on this bid are estimated. The actual quantities purchased may vary from this estimate.

Mr. Morris questioned if the NFT is using school copiers and equipment at the expense of taxpayers.

Mr. Webb stated that the NFT purchases their own supplies when using district equipment.

Mr. Morris suggested that the Policy Committee should address the NFT's usage of the district's equipment.

Mr. Webb stated that Bid No. 14 - 01 and 14 - 05 will be agenda items at the May 22, 2013 Public Board Meeting.

8. Committee Reports

a) Board Policies

Ms. Boyle advised the Board that the next meeting has not yet been scheduled.

b) Educational Development

Mr. Sposato informed the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for May 13th.

c) Finance/Facilities

Mr. Webb advised the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for May 14th, and will be discussing independent audits.

d) IU Board

Mrs. Cummings was not present.

e) Education Foundation

Mr. Copeland informed the Board that there was no update at this time.

f) Technical School

Mr. Morris advised the Board that the Technical School is saving approximately \$180,000.

Mr. Koutsouradis asked what is the total amount of enrollment.

Mr. Morris stated he did not have the exact numbers.

g) Technology

Mr. Shubin was not present.

h) Ad Hoc Facility Use Update

Mr. Oettinger was not present.

9. Public Comment

Steve Rodos, retired, residing in the Villages of Flowers Mill, stated that the adjusted budget for the current year has an approximate \$6 million excess of expenditures over revenue. He questioned if there is no contract settlement does that money carry over to the reserve for next year allowing for no tax increase for the coming year.

Almando Carrasquillo, retired, residing in Langhorne, asked if the air conditioning unit that needs repair could be repaired by the Tech School in order to save the district money. Mr. Carrasquillo also asked if the Neshaminy students test results for college placement could be monitored and reported upon for math, science, English and writing skills.

Angie Manning, teacher, residing in Langhorne, suggested that the district consider looking into home books instead of iPads in preparation for the PARCC tests, which will be coming in the near future.

Stephen Pirritano, self-employed, residing in Feasterville, thanked Ms. Boyle, Mrs. Cummings, Dr. Rattigan and Mr. Copeland for attending the Policy meeting and participating in a spirited discussion. Mr. Pirritano asked for an explanation about the expense for teacher mentors. He also asked for discussion on the evaluation of Administrators and the standards that are used. Mr. Pirritano said if it comes to a choice between STEM and FCS, he would choose STEM.

10. Future Topics

None

11. Agenda Development for the May 22, 2013 Public Board Meeting

None

12. Board Comment

Mr. Congdon remarked that the current contract proposal provides a \$9 thousand salary increase for teachers. While they would now be required to pay a percentage for medical coverage, the increase would still be substantial and he is amazed that the NFT has not acknowledged this generous offer from the School Board. He also asked if neighboring school districts have MOU's and if it is typical in most school districts in Bucks County to have MOU's. Mr. Congdon said he feels all the MOU's should be terminated and going forward if the NFT feels a need for a specific one it can be voted on and approved at that time.

Mr. Webb replied that MOU's are not typical in most school districts. He said there are some with a very few MOU's, but none to the extent of 201 such as Neshaminy. He also stated that the issue is not the MOU's per se, but rather whether they were instituted with or without the knowledge and approval of the school board.

Mr. Morris asked if there are some MOU's that are not signed.

Mr. Webb replied that is correct; however, once an action is taken and continued, it is considered past practice.

Mr. Morris asked if there is a possibility that there are any MOU's that are unknown at this time.

Mr. Webb replied that it has been stipulated that whatever has been revealed to date will be all that is taken into consideration.

Mr. Morris suggested that the retirees give back their \$28 thousand incentive bonus to school programs to benefit the students. He also agreed that all the MOU's should be eliminated.

Mrs. Markowitz clarified that any excess money does roll over into the fund balance.

Mr. Congdon remarked that the air conditioner in question is out-dated and the efficiency is inadequate.

Mr. Copeland stated that the past practice of inviting former Neshaminy students to come back and report to the Administration regarding their educational experience at Neshaminy has been successful. He said that teacher evaluation is an observation process based on specific criteria. There is also a principal evaluation process based on state based criteria. Mr. Copeland said that the same state standards that are taught in the FCS program can be included in Public Speaking, Drama, and Debate programs. A new program would also include a study skills program to prepare students for high school.

Mr. Congdon asked if there has ever been an evaluation of teachers by the students.

Mr. Copeland said he is not aware of a formal evaluation; however, he has seen individual teachers offer surveys to their students to evaluate the teacher for the teacher's own knowledge.

Mr. Morris asked if Neshaminy is doing evaluations on teachers at this time.

Mr. Copeland said teachers are being evaluated currently, but the process will be updated. He said the evaluation is an accumulative process throughout the year.

Dr. Rattigan said that the new state evaluation process for Administrator evaluation that is going into effect in 2014-2015 is an update and revision to a process that has been going on for years.

Mr. Koutsouradis asked if previous Board members were aware of what was going on with the MOU's.

Webb replied some MOU's were created with the knowledge of Board members at the time, but very few.

Mr. Webb remarked that the problem with many of the MOU's is that it takes away the ability of management to manage. The current few MOU's, which would be acceptable, should be part of the contract and this is where the impasse exists. Mr. Webb said he found Ann Schmidt to be very professional in negotiating and he hopes to have further meetings in the near future.

13. Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. Webb moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Morris seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 8:34 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Jennifer Burns
Board Secretary