

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
September 10, 2013

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on September 10, 2013 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. Scott E. Congdon, Vice President  
Ms. Irene Boyle  
Mrs. Susan Cummings  
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis  
Mr. Mike Morris  
Mr. William Oettinger  
Mr. Mr. Mark Shubin  
Mr. Anthony Sposato

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

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

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHERS:** Approximately 150 persons from the public, staff and press

**SECRETARY:** Mrs. Jennifer Burns

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

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Mr. Webb announced that an Executive Session was held from 6:15 to 7:05 regarding personnel issues.

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**3. Announcements**

Mr. Webb read the following statement:

School Boards have forever looked for ways to trim costs in the endeavor to pay bills, retain and improve programs, enhance math, science and computer skills for our students. Many districts are presently reviewing or embarking on consolidation plans, designed to streamline costs while repairing or replacing older buildings. Neshaminy, of course, is no different; we want to accomplish the same goals.

Six years ago the Board hired a consultant to review the condition of the District's buildings and provide recommendations for repair and consolidations for the Board's perusal and consideration. Again, a few years ago the Board renewed a study by the same consultant which resulted in the proposal for a large elementary school to be built on the Tawanka site, along with a twenty four classroom addition to Pearl Buck. The plan suggested the closing of three elementary schools and the remaining schools would get updated with heating, air-conditioning, and new windows.

This plan, although never formally approved, was considered the leading option until interest rates made this project not doable at the present time. Our ability to complete this project as planned and stay within the Act One limit is not possible.

Therefore, the Board has agreed to reinstate the Ad Hoc Committee to review other options that are financially feasible and equitable. The committee is charged with presenting the Board and the community with a new plan within three to six months.

I want to make it very clear that doing nothing is not an option. We may close some buildings if that is unavoidable. The committee will operate in full view of the public and seek public input. Additionally, we will do a Press Release after each meeting for the public to review in the paper and the Neshaminy website.

I ask by a show of unity for a voice vote that we as a Board are in agreement with my statement.

The Board unanimously agreed with the above statement by a vote of 9 ayes and 0 nays.

#### **4. Superintendent's Report**

Mr. Copeland advised the Board on the Following:

- Welcomed teachers, parents, and students back to 2013/14 school year.

#### **5. Public Comment**

Kevin Gallagher, IT analysis, Middletown Township, spoke on the issue of choices and changes. He stated the district is faced with some kind of a choice and the possibility of change. Mr. Gallagher said that the choice is spending our limited finances on buildings or academic programs. He also stated that if there is a referendum he suggests that the referendum addresses the issues of student programs, facilities, and the funds to caterer to them.

Ed Kern, retired School Superintendant, Levittown, thanked the Board for their consideration and willingness to take another look at the consolidation project.

Angie Manning, public school teacher, Langhorne, thanked the Board for their reconsideration of the school consolidation project. She also asked if early dismissal days could be added to the school calendar.

Steve Rodos, retired, Langhorne, thanked the Board for their consideration on revisiting the consolidation project. Mr. Rodos asked if notice will be given out to members on the Ad Hoc Committee as to when the meeting is scheduled, and also, will interested persons who would like to serve on the committee be added. He also asked how successful the full-day kindergarten has been. Mr. Rodos recommended that the graduation project be a public service project, rather than a PowerPoint presentation.

LeAnn Hartpence, Langhorne, thanked the Board for recognizing that the district needs to address the facility issue. Ms. Hartpence ask that the district come together as one and focus on the issues at hand. She also stated that all schools are not equal in the district, but the reality is that some sort of consolidation needs to happen. Ms. Hartpence thanked Mr. Copeland for making improvements within the contents of the budget constraints we have in place, but she would like to bring back things that the district has lost as well as, expand upon what we can offer.

Charles Alfonso, retired, Langhorne, handed out a packet to the Board on scientific studies on schools. He stated that the three factors in evaluating schools are teacher quality, curriculum, and school size. Mr. Alfonso stated that school size is the Board's responsibility and there is documentation that shows, unequivocally, that large elementary schools are bad. Mr. Alfonso implored the Board and the Ad Hoc Committee not to make a financial decision, but an educational decision.

Stephen Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, welcomed back teachers, students, and administration. He stated that he understands the Board's decision to take another look at the district's options. He also said that he commends the Board for recognizing that a consolidation needs to happen and that PSERS is a problem for this district. Mr. Pirritano said the most important issue is what happens inside the classroom and not the equity of the buildings.

Anthony Waskie, professor at Temple University, Philadelphia, stated his granddaughter attends Oliver Heckman and is well-adjusted and loves her school. Mr. Waskie applauded the Board on re-evaluating the consolidation project. He stated that he has had 30 years of education in a neighboring school district and is well aware of all the studies that have been done and agrees that the local community small schools, where the students get personal attention and growth potential, are best.

## **6. Items for Approval tonight**

### **a) Certified and Support Personnel Report**

Mr. Copeland presented the following for approval:

- **Elections - Certified Personnel**
- **Elections - Support Personnel**
- **Resignations/Leaves – Support Personnel**

Mr. Copeland recommended the approval of the Personnel Report for Certified and Support Personnel. Mr. Shubin moved that the Certified and Support Personnel Report be approved and Ms. Boyle seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion by a vote of 9 ayes and 0 nays.

### **b) Approval of request for Sunday Field Usage at NHS by the Bucks County Bulldogs**

Mr. Copeland presented the following for approval:

- **Sunday Field Usage at NHS by the Bucks County Bulldogs**
- **Sunday Auditorium Usage at Maple Point Middle School by the Community Youth Orchestra of Bucks County**

Mr. Oettinger made a motion to approve the two above requests for Sunday Usage.

Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion.

Mr. Congdon asked if there are any costs to the district.

Mr. Copeland stated that if there are any costs they must assume those costs.

The Board unanimously approved said motion by a vote of 9 ayes and 0 nays.

### **c) Overnight Trips**

Mr. Copeland presented the following trips for approval:

- **Neshaminy High School Cheerleading Team to Reach the Beach National Competition, Ocean City, Maryland - February 22 - 23, 2014**
- **Neshaminy High School Vocal Adjudication and Performance Trip to Orlando/Bahamas - April 4 to April 8, 2014**

Mrs. Cummings made a motion to approve said trips.

Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion by a vote of 9 ayes and 0 nays.

## **7. Items for Approval at the September 24th Public Board Meeting**

### **a) Election of PSBA Officers**

Mr. Copeland stated that the Election of PSBA Officers will be an agenda item at the September 24th, Public Board Meeting.

## **8. Committee Reports**

### **a) Board Polices**

Ms. Boyle advised the Board that the next meeting will be in October and the exact date will be posted on the district's website.

### **b) Educational Development**

Mr. Shubin informed the Board that no date has been scheduled for the next meeting as of yet.

### **c) Finance/Facilities**

Mr. Webb advised the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for September 16th, and topics will consist of financing.

### **d) IU Board**

Mrs. Cummings informed the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for September 17th.

### **e) Education Foundation**

Mr. Copeland informed the Board that the next meeting has not yet been scheduled.

### **f) Technical School**

Mr. Morris advised the Board that the next meeting is scheduled right before the next Board meeting.

### **g) Technology**

Mr. Shubin advised the Board that the committee is still working on setting a date.

### **h) Ad Hoc Facility Use Update**

Mr. Oettinger stated that a date will be set by the next Board meeting on the 24th.

Mr. Congdon asked if the Finance and Facilities meeting could be combined with the Ad Hoc Facility meeting on the 16th, since both committees will be discussing the same issues.

Mr. Oettinger stated that he would like all the finances in order first.

Mr. Koutsouradis stated that it would have to be confirmed with the construction manager and whoever else would need to be there first.

Mr. Webb stated if there was no objection then that would be fine.

## **9. Future Topics**

None.

## **10. Agenda Development for the September 24th. Public Board Meeting**

None

## **11. Other Board Business**

Mr. Congdon said that combining the Finance and Facilities meeting with the Ad Hoc Facility meeting would be a good way for everyone to get on the same page.

Mr. Oettinger stated that was fine.

## **12. Public Comment**

Stephen Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, stated that he would like to see the Board Policy Committee revisit the professional dress code. He also stated that he agreed with the idea of combining the Finance and Facilities meeting with the Ad Hoc meeting to expedite the information between the two committees. Mr. Pirritano thanked Mr. Copeland and staff for getting Neshaminy off to a great new school year.

Larry Pastor, Middletown, Business Executive, welcomed everyone back for the new school year. Mr. Pastor commended the Board for re-examining the consolidation project considering that the finances of the district have changed. He asked that the goals and timeline for the consolidation plan be highlighted during Board comment.

### **13. Board Comment**

Mr. Copeland stated that they would take a look at the calendar and make sure that everything is up to date. He also stated that full-day kindergarten got off to a great start and also they will be taking a look at the senior project for students.

Mr. Copeland stated that there was one other Sunday usage request for the Bucks County Challenge Football and asked for the Board's approval.

Mr. Congdon made a motion to accept said request for Sunday usage.

Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

Mr. Webb clarified that they would still provide insurance and any custodial cost that may occur.

The Board unanimously approved said motion by a vote of 9 ayes and 0 nays.

Mr. Shubin applauded Pearl Buck students for their outstanding registered reading program over the summer. He commended Ms. McCafferty's class, Rachel Lamm, Mika Miles, and Chris Patel for their outstanding achievements. He also stated that the district continues to have an excessive of expenditures over revenue; which means, that the district is spending more money in the operating budget than what comes in. Effectively, the district is using money from the reserves to pay for the operation of the district this year. Mr. Shubin stated that he proposes that the district come up with \$1.8 to \$2 million dollars in operational savings each year and that the district invests that money on educational programs.

Mr. Webb stated that the district has to work within the budget and then decide which options are best for our district.

### **14. Adjournment of Meeting**

Mr. Shubin moved the meeting be adjourned and Ms. Boyle seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Jennifer Burns  
Board Secretary