

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
(WORK SESSION)  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
May 11, 2004

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on May 11, 2004, at Maple Point Middle School Board Room. The following persons were in attendance:

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Mr. Richard M. Eccles, President  
Dr. William H. Spitz, Vice President  
Mrs. Sue C. Barrett  
Mrs. June R. Bostwick  
Mr. Jason Bowman  
Mrs. Susan Cummings  
Ms. Carol A. Drioli  
Mrs. Kimberly A. Jowett  
Mr. Ritchie Webb

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

Mr. P. Howard Wilson  
Dr. Raymond J. Boccuti  
Dr. Sandra Costanzo  
Mr. Harry P. Jones  
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise  
Mr. Bruce M. Wyatt

**OTHERS:** Approximately 22 persons from the public, staff and press

**SECRETARY:** Mrs. Anita E. Walls

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

---

Prior to the Work Session an Executive Session was held to discuss personnel matters.

1. **Call to Order**

Mr. Eccles called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

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

3. **Announcements**

No Announcements

4. **Public Comment**

Mr. Kevin Emig, Langhorne, PA stated the following:

"I am here this evening to provide information to the Board regarding the Neshaminy Boy's Lacrosse Team. The team is comprised of almost 40 players forming varsity and JV teams. Most of the students attend Neshaminy High School, but there are also 9<sup>th</sup> grade players from the Neshaminy middle schools. The teams practice five days a week after school and three hours on Sunday afternoon at Maple Point. The teams compete in the Bucks Mont Lacrosse League with area schools including Council Rock, Plymouth Whitmarsh and Truman. Tomorrow night we end our second season with a neighborhood battle against Pennsbury. The team is coached by Paul Karren who played at the University of Pennsylvania and Dan Winter, a teacher here at Maple Point. We have an operating budget of \$9,000 more than half of which is for coach's salaries. Field costs, referees, league fees, and uniforms are most of the additional expenses. The monies have been raised by registration fees and fundraisers. Two weeks ago the bowling fundraiser profited \$3,500.00. The players recently earned \$900.00 through a car wash. A second car wash was rained out and is being rescheduled with the team promising to donate half of the proceeds to aid the recent car accident victims of the Central Bucks Lacrosse team. We expect to end this season with more than a \$2,000.00 positive balance. The Lower Bucks Lacrosse League provides a

feeder system for our program. There are currently 140 boys in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades on these teams with more than 25% of them Neshaminy kids. Hopefully, you will agree that we have the players, parents, fields, funds, coaches and organizations required to have a successful boy's lacrosse program. What we need is this Board to recognize the tremendous growth of boy's lacrosse and to do what the Suburban One League and other area schools like Truman and Pennsbury have already done. Approve boy's lacrosse as a varsity sport at the high school. In the coming months we trust that this Board along with the administration at the high school will partner with us, so that we can become the Neshaminy High School Boy's Lacrosse Team."

Mr. Eric Rooney, Senior at Neshaminy High School came before the Board with a very personal matter. Mr. Rooney is placing his fate in the Board's hands. Mr. Rooney set a goal and dream for himself in 9<sup>th</sup> grade that he wanted to be the Valedictorian at graduation. Mr. Rooney worked countless hours to obtain this goal. Mr. Rooney cannot begin to express how much work it has taken. As of last year he was tied with three individuals. This year Mr. Rooney received a shock of his life when he found out that he may not be honored as Valedictorian of his class and he may not receive the recognition at graduation that he feels he earned. Mr. Rooney wanted to keep this a private matter, however, recently he has taken his concerns to the office and some of the secretaries were speaking outside of school about the matter. Mr. Rooney was ripped apart by this because he took his issue to school in confidence and something so private that I didn't want people to know, but now that I know that it has been happening, I figure I might as well bring the matter to the Board. Mr. Rooney spoke with the Assistant Principal, Mr. Washington. He advised that he took his issue to heart and that basically he suggested I do what is right and fight for myself. "Nothing occurs in a vacuum." Mr. Rooney took this to mean that if he believes strongly in this it should be brought before people.

In the third marking period of this year Mr. Rooney was blindsided when he found out that Neshaminy High School policy is to determine the Valedictorian and Salutatorian positions as of the third marking period. It has come to Mr. Rooney's attention that no written policy has ever existed stating that this would be the case. Mr. Rooney would only have known this if he were aware of the oral tradition, which was passed down. The two students that Mr. Rooney is in contention with have older siblings that have attended the school, so maybe they are aware of same. Mr. Rooney is upset because knowing that the ways things are working out, due to the number of AP classes taken by those in contention, that as of the third marking period where he was ranked number three, Mr. Rooney could at the end of the year when final grades are delivered he could be tied as number one with another student. It pierces Mr. Rooney's heart to know that he could be sitting at his own graduation ceremony that he worked so hard to be recognized and listen to two people that he has been neck in neck with for the last four years, and actually ahead of one of them, while they are giving the speech that Mr. Rooney feels he deserves. Mr. Rooney had another meeting with Mr. Menio today and basically he stuck by the position that this is how it has always been done. Nothing that he could say would change his mind. Mr. Rooney feels there is an overwhelming amount of evidence and support on his side. Mr. Rooney stated that Mr. Menio listened but when he elaborated upon the points, Mr. Menio stated that this is how it is and if you keep bringing up the issue you are basically wasting my time. Mr. Rooney has spent four years working every single night. Mr. Rooney takes five (5) AP classes. Mr. Rooney feels this is more important than any score on an AP exam and he feels he needs to present this case. Mr. Rooney wants to be recognized. Mr. Rooney does not care whether he is announced as Valedictorian or Salutatorian, but he feels that if he is ranked as number one or two as of graduation day he should be given ten minutes at graduation to give a speech. Mr. Rooney hopes that this can be looked into.

Mr. Howard Lindner, Langhorne, PA congratulated the Mr. Rooney for fighting for what he believes in. If you can prove your case, keep on fighting, however, if for some reason they prove you are wrong, then you need to step aside. Mr. Lindner feels that Mr. Rooney represents what Neshaminy represents. Teaching people the difference between right and wrong. Stand up if you think there is an injustice. Mr. Lindner was very proud of Mr. Rooney.

Mr. Lindner stated that after the last school board meeting Mr. Cummings, who was a student when Mr. Lindner was an administrator years ago, stated that he was disappointed. Mr. Cummings stated you never thanked the people on the Board who voted for a referendum. Mr. Lindner at this time thanked the board members who voted for a referendum. Mr. Lindner thanked Mr. Eccles who fought for two years to give the people an opportunity to have a say. Mr. Lindner stated, "The time has come for the Neshaminy School District population to come together. Martha Lindner urged unity to reconstruct Neshaminy High School into a building for the twenty-first century. In doing so we must also find the most reasonable price that our community can afford. Thirty-six percent of registered voters voted in the primary, an unusually large number for a primary election. The vote was a mandate to reconstruct and not build new. I feel the Board must abide by the voter's desires. Reconstruction will save millions of dollars. Stop the letters to the editor and start thinking that it is time to put aside our differences and work for a solution, which will satisfy every taxpayer in the district and give our students the best educational experience available. We are not talking about throwing good money after bad, or using a band aid approach. Our visions are a reconstructed building, being like brand new and utilizing the good parts and lasting 50 years. Neshaminy has always had great schools and great neighborhoods to this day. In fact, the new construction of homes is now selling starting from \$300,000 up to over \$500,000. I know that this Board has the wisdom to know what to do next after this last election. Now, the Board must start doing it. To accomplish great things one must not only act, but dream."

Ms. Drioli inquired how many students were on the lacrosse team. Mr. Emig replied 39.

Ms. Drioli noted that she thought the CARE people ran on the platform that the building could be renovated for less money than it costs to rebuild. Ms. Drioli thought that CARE had an idea in mind. Ms. Drioli suggested that the Board start with that idea, unless it was not the case. Ms. Drioli was concerned that a campaign was run for members of this Board on the premises that you knew that the building could be renovated better than it could be rebuilt. Ms. Drioli would assume that you knew what you were talking about when the campaign was run. Ms. Drioli would assume that there were facts and figures. Ms. Drioli wants to see the facts and figures at the next meeting. Ms. Drioli has not been present at the past two meetings due to work commitments; Ms. Drioli would have already called for those facts and figures. A campaign was run and the public was advised that it could be done better; we know that we can renovate. Ms. Drioli would like to see the evidence of same. Ms. Drioli would like to start at that point. Hopefully, this was not just politics as usual. Promise everything and deliver nothing. Ms. Drioli would like to see a plan in two weeks along with the facts and figures.

5. **Items for Discussion**

a) **Delta Community Supports, Inc. Lease Agreement**

Lease was distributed to Board members prior to meeting. Mr. Paradise advised that two-thirds of the Eisenhower School is rented to Delta Community Supports, Inc. which is a Bucks County organization which helps special needs children. Mr. Paradise noted it is time to renegotiate the lease. Mr. Paradise noted that Section 5, page two provides annual rental and Section 18, page six, which provides an option to terminate the lease. Mr. Paradise advised that the district is happy with the tenant.

Mr. Bowman inquired how the rental schedule was developed. Mr. Paradise responded that it was based on square footage rental space in the area and in conjunction with the tenant's ability to pay. Mr. Paradise noted that it is not a triple net lease. Mr. Paradise noted that Delta pays utilities, but the district does provide some maintenance service on the building since it is a Neshaminy building.

Mr. Paradise will take a fresh look at the lease and speak with a realtor to determine what would be appropriate square footage rental space fees at the present time.

Mr. Bowman noted that if a rent schedule is developed at 2% increase a year it seems very inexpensive due to the fact that the district is providing maintenance. Mr. Bowman would like to see a comparison from a good commercial realtor.

Ms. Drioli inquired whether Delta Community is a taxpayer supported operation. Mr. Paradise advised that they receive funds from the state and county, since it is an approved private school for special education placements.

**6. Items for Approval**

**a) Overnight Trips**

Mr. Wyatt provided the following information.

- i) **Ambassadors of Caring Leadership Program – Neshaminy High School – June 2 & 3, 2004, Holocaust Museum, Washington, D.C.**
- ii) **Future Problem Solving Conference – Neshaminy Middle School – June 3 – 6, 2004, Lexington, KY**
- iii) **Future Business Leaders National Competition and Conference – Neshaminy High School – July 12-18, 2004, Denver, Colorado**

Mr. Eccles inquired what the Ambassadors Program consisted of. Mr. Wyatt stated that students that are very actively involved in their school service community projects are brought together from all of the country to share ideas and promote service learning.

Mrs. Cummings inquired why the district was covering expenses for one trip and not the others. Mr. Wyatt noted that the Future Problem Solving program is an extension of the AE curriculum and the cost is born by the district.

Dr. Boccuti noted that the 10 students attending the Future Business Leaders National Competition are the only students from Bucks County that have been selected.

There was board consensus for the three trips presented.

**b) Appointment of School Board Treasurer**

Mr. Wilson noted that Joseph V. Paradise is currently the Board Treasurer. However, the Board may choose to get another treasurer and provide a salary to that person. Mr. Paradise has agreed to act as School Board Treasurer for another year.

Mr. Eccles suggested that there may possibly be an individual in the community that would volunteer their time to act as Treasurer. Mr. Webb noted that a problem does arise when signatures are needed by the Treasurer. The person is not always easily accessible. Mr. Webb's recommendation would be that Mr. Paradise continues with the position.

Ms. Drioli suggested that it could be a position that a senior citizen would like to have. A program is in place that a senior who provides time to the district can receive money off their taxes.

Mr. Profy advised that the Treasurer position is a designated term of one year, but it is not a constitutional office, therefore, the Treasurer does serve at the pleasure of the appointed Board.

Mrs. Bostwick questioned what type of bonding or insurance would be needed for a volunteer individual. Mr. Paradise noted that any individual acting as Treasurer would need to be bonded.

There was board consensus to appoint Mr. Paradise, however, anyone interested in volunteering their time to act as Treasurer the Board would certainly take that individual into consideration.

**c) 2004-2005 Preliminary Budget**

Mr. Paradise provided the Board and the viewing public with a Power Point presentation.

✓ Working Draft Expenditure Summary 2004-2005

- ✓ Total Budget is \$141,220,000, which is up 5.8% as of April, 2004
- ✓ Significant increases the district is facing
- ✓ Cost of Human Resources (salaries/benefits)
- ✓ Special Education
- ✓ Technical School payment
- ✓ Additional Debt Service - \$25M bond
- ✓ Fuel Oil/Diesel Fuel prices

Mr. Paradise noted that the vast majority of income for school districts is based on real estate taxes. The state legislature has imposed this option. Public schools must get more income by raising the tax rate. The state of Pennsylvania gets the vast majority of their income from sales and personal income taxes, which are growing tax bases.

Mr. Paradise noted that state funding continues to decline. Only 28% of instructional expenditures are paid for by the state. 18% of the total budget is paid by the state. State revenues continue to decline.

Mr. Paradise further explained that state and federal mandates are consistently driving up the cost of public education.

80% of the District costs are Human Resources.

- Certified staff contract provides for 2.75% increase
- Support staff contract provides for 3.0% increase
- Health insurance projected premium increases of 16% (equates to \$2.3M increase)
- Social security taxes (increase of \$163,000)
- Retirement system payment (increase of \$483,000)

Mr. Paradise advised that interest income has a tremendous impact on the budget. Rates have been steadily declining.

State retirement system shows that the rate dropped dramatically in the 90's. The employer (state and school district) contributions will be increased in 2004-2005.

Major Expenditure Increase:

- Technical School increase of approximately \$700,000 or 34% increase over current contributions.
- Fuel oil/Diesel fuel (district uses 1.2 million gallons per year).
  - Estimating costs at \$1.25 - \$1.75 per gallon.
  - Bid for County is due May 28, 2004 and more accurate price will be determined.
- Special Education Expenditures:
  - \$19.5M for current year. Increase of \$1.8M (10.2% increase) will be necessary to provide same program with minor modifications.
  - State provides \$5.5M for program. District is spending additional \$14M to provide programs.
  - Contracted IU special education - \$1.4M or increase of 19%.
  - Contracted Alternative Schools - \$1.3M.
- Charter School
  - \$400,000 increase. District has spent over \$1M for charter schools in Neshaminy over the last three years.

Any child who wishes to attend Charter School the district must pay tuition rate to that Charter School. Per pupil allocation is lost. Costs cannot be reduced by the district.

- Capital Improvement Bond Issue
  - Provides for level debt service – payments of principal and interest of \$1.9M.
  - One time impact on the budget.

DISTRICT OPTIONS:

- Continually monitor real estate assessments and business tax receipts.
- Monitor Federal Reserve on investment rates.
- Review staffing changes and make adjustments.
- Eliminate or reduce programs or services.
- Reducing per pupil allocation by 5% - Budget provides for 3% increase.
- Eliminate DARE program.
- Reducing the Superintendent Mini Grant award.
- Reducing supplies and travel district wide by 5%.
- Eliminate non-contractual new positions.
- Increase revenue, i.e. increase facility usage fees.
- Increase aquatic program fees.
- Reduce non-essential staff absences due to school business.
- Limit all facilities project lists to items of health, safety or facility protection.
- Continue to review use of the Fund Balance.
- Promote tax reform in the state of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Paradise noted that the district has used \$3.2M from the Fund balance in prior years. Mr. Paradise noted that the Fund Balance was approximately \$10M. The budget in the current year was adopted with the understanding of using approximately \$3.2M. The district will have approximately \$7M in the Fund Balance at the end of the fiscal year. The district will be in the position to increase the amount of Fund Balance that is used for the upcoming budget. Mr. Paradise would never recommend using too much Fund Balance.

Dr. Spitz requested that a history of the Fund Balance be prepared. Mr. Paradise advised that he would update same.

Mr. Paradise noted that by law a Preliminary Budget must be adopted by May 25, 2004. Final Budget approval will occur on June 29, 2004.

Finance Committee Meetings will take place on: May 13, 2004, May 20, 2004, and May 27, 2004.

Mr. Paradise stated a budget increase of 45.2 mills (5.83% increase) as of the end of April 2004. Mr. Paradise distributed a sheet with Budget Changes and a memorandum from Mr. Wilson. The district will continue budget considerations for 2004-2005 Short Term and Long Term. Mr. Wilson is optimistic that the district can get the budget below 30 mills.

Mr. Paradise noted that as of today's date reductions have occurred:

- \$1.6M which equates to approximately 9 mills
  - Adjusting for bond issue
  - Adjusting for tuition payment from Tech School
  - Contracted carrier changes
  - Pre-payment savings in Blue Cross/Blue Shield

➤ Retirement changes

Mr. Eccles stated that Mr. Paradise has technically done a tremendous job with the budget, however he is appalled at the figure of 45.2 mills with a reduction sheet of 9 mills. Why is the Board not given a real, working budget. Why is fluff added into the budget? Mr. Eccles used the example of the high tech paper towel holders in the men's room. Mr. Paradise responded that they were provided free from the vendor and are actually a cost saving mechanism.

Mr. Paradise further advised that the date on the Working Draft Expenditure document is April 14, 2004. The additional sheet reflects the fact that the district has worked aggressively to reduce the budget during the period of time. This is a public process and must occur in public. Fresh data is being accumulated daily to help reduce the budget.

Last years millage increase was 28.8 mills.

Mr. Paradise noted that the Board adopted a budget in the current year in which \$500,000 was transferred to a Capital Reserve Fund. That money remains unspent and will remain to accumulate. This year's budget provides for another transfer of \$500,000 into that Capital Reserve Fund.

Dr. Spitz feels the budget process is a necessary and public process and it must occur in this manner. Significant changes have occurred in the past several weeks to reduce the budget to the present figures. Dr. Spitz is concerned regarding transportation costs. Mr. Paradise will provide an analysis of said transportation costs and provide same to Dr. Spitz.

Ms. Drioli stated that Neshaminy's budget documents are the best detailed in the County. It is one of the most concise public documents that is made available.

Mr. Eccles feels that there is 10% out there. If it is not an essential service, it has nothing to do with the education of our children that we should be looking to cut 10%. Need to work harder and smarter. It is part of the Superintendent and his cabinet's responsibility to submit a budget where savings can be realized.

**d) 2004-2005 Bucks County Technical School Budget**

Dr. Spitz provided a summary of the Tech School budget that was distributed to all Board members prior to the meeting. The semi-annual joint board convention will take place on Thursday, May 13, 2004 at which time the vote will take place to approve the budget. Six board members are planning to attend the meeting. Those not in attendance will be Mr. Bowman, Mrs. Jowett, and Mrs. Cummings.

Proposed Budget for 2004-2005 school year is \$16.9M, which represents a 7.23% increase.

Brief overview:

- Neshaminy's enrollment – 250 students.
- Allocation – 392 students.
- Bristol Township oversubscribes to the Tech School.
- Special Education – Neshaminy sends a higher portion of special education students to the Tech School than any other district.
- Four new positions proposed, one reading specialist to address PSSA scores.
- 20% of total enrollment is special education students.
- The Tech School does not maintain a Fund Balance.
- Neshaminy's payment will be \$2.7M, which represents a \$680,000 increase.

Dr. Spitz is recommending that Board members approve the budget. Mr. Paradise distributed a memo from the Tech School Business Administrator in which they have asked the district to participate in the Blue Cross prepayment plan. Each sending district must approve same and should provide a cost savings to each sending district.

**e) Bids/Budget Transfers**

Information distributed prior to the meeting. Mr. Paradise reviewed the following bids:

Bid No. 05-16 Transportation Parts Supplies

Bid Amount: \$81,946.86

Various supplies for the maintenance of District vehicles for SY 2004/2005. Quantities on this bid are estimated. The actual quantities purchased may vary from this estimate but will not exceed the total recommended for award.

Bid 05-13 Classroom & Art Aids

Bid Amount: \$34,473.46

Classroom and art supplies for the 2004/2005 school year which include: paints, drawing paper, brushes, markers, yarn, cloth, and other arts and crafts materials for classroom use.

The two bids 05-16 and 05-13 will be presented for approval at the May 25<sup>th</sup> Public Meeting.

**7. Superintendent's Report**

No report.

**8. Committee Reports**

**a) Board Policies**

No report.

**b) Educational Development**

Dr. Spitz advised a meeting will take place on May 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.

**c) Finance/Facilities**

Mr. Webb advised a meeting will take place on May 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. to discuss budget and agenda items, i.e. direction of high school project, usage fees, etc.

**d) IU Board**

No report.

**e) Educational Foundation**

Mrs. Cummings advised a meeting took place on May 10<sup>th</sup>. The foundation is looking for ways to support programs and projects not funded by the regular school budget. Help is needed in the form of ads or auction items for the program booklet for the Fifties Night.

**f) Technical School**

No report.

**g) Technology**

Mrs. Jowett advised that a meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

**9. Future Topics**

Mr. Eccles referred to an item called "Swapation" to the Finance Committee. It deals with cashing in bonds and swapping them to have a savings occur for the district. Mr. Paradise has a current update, which will be shared with the Finance Committee at the meeting tomorrow night.



Ms. Drioli inquired regarding the progress of SAGE. Mr. Wilson responded that Dr. Costanzo has had a meeting and the program is in the stages of being implemented.

Mr. Paradise noted that the district will allow the seniors to work off some of their tax bill and provide them cash payment so that they can use as payment toward their tax bill.

10. **Agenda Development for May 25, 2004 Public Meeting**

11. **Correspondence**

The Board Secretary advised that there was no correspondence.

12. **Other Board Business**

No other Board business.

13. **Adjournment**

Mr. Eccles moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Bowman seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls  
Board Secretary