

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING
PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
November 12, 2008

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on November 12, 2008, in the Board Room of the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Richard M. Eccles, President
Mr. Joseph Blasch
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis
Dr. William H. Spitz
Mr. Ritchie Webb

ADMINISTRATORS:

Mr. Paul J. Kadri
Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Dr. Sandra Costanzo
Dr. Geeta Heble*
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise

BOARD MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:

Ms. Irene Boyle
Mr. Frank Koziol, Vice President
Mr. William D. O'Connor

OTHERS: Approximately 12 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Anita E. Walls

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

*arrived at 7:25 p.m.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Eccles called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

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

3. Announcements

Mr. Eccles advised that Ms. Boyle and Mr. Koziol are both ill and Mr. O'Connor is working and unable to attend this evening's meeting.

4. Public Comment

Mr. Solis Basen, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that the district is almost half a year into the budget. The budget that would seem to satisfy everyone, the taxpayers, the Administration, the teachers. No increases which were fine, however, we are to the point where we need to think about next year's budget. Mr. Basen stated that the past budget was a band aid. Things are going up and income is coming down. This Board needs to cut expenses and present a new budget which will have a lot of trimming.

Mrs. Lisa Reiser, Langhorne, PA, thanked the district, Ms. Susan Weber, Dr. Costanzo and Ms. Irene Boyle for the opportunity for the children to participate in Kid's Voting on Election Day. It was a great opportunity for them to start to understand the civic responsibility to vote. Thank you to Susan Weber and Ms. Phyllis Albrecht from Pennswood Village who worked together to enable the district to have residents from Pennswood Village and the League of Women Voters come and help with the students at Neshaminy Middle School.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, thanked the Board for having the Strategic Meetings at the neighborhood schools. The residents appreciate the efforts of bringing the discussions of school issues into their local areas. Hopefully, a suitable location will be found for the Tawanka program. Just a reminder that we are approximately two (2) months from approving the preliminary budget for next

year. Due to the tough economy Mr. Rodos urged the Board to realize that there may be demands upon the school district from families who previously sent children to private and religious schools and from the families who may want their kindergarten students in a full day program so that a parent can seek additional income while saving the expense of morning or afternoon daycare. Mr. Rodos believes that the Board should re-examine Mr. Koziol's request of a few years ago to increase by a small amount the distance a student must walk to school. Also, Mr. Rodos suggested that the bus routes be closely examined in an effort to consolidate stops which are within a short distance of one another. Mr. Rodos also suggested a renewed effort to coordinate the private schools morning start and afternoon dismissals so that we do not have to send three buses to various schools along the same route when one bus may be sufficient. Trying to cut expenses is an attempt to resolve the obvious problem that receipts in all likelihood will be less than the current year. With these thoughts in mind Mr. Rodos urged the Board not to make cuts at the expense of the education of the 9,000 school students whose education is your responsibility. The homeowners are doing more than their share when it comes to real estate taxes. Mr. Rodos suggested that the assessments of the businesses in the area to see if any improvements would have and should have resulted in increased real estate assessments and, therefore, higher taxes to them.

5. **Items for Discussion**

a) **High School Construction Update**

Mr. Paradise advised that the project only has 46 weeks remaining and 122 weeks have been accomplished to date.

Mr. Paul Erickson from ATS&R and Mr. Damion Spahr from Reynolds Construction provide an update on the progression of the high school construction.

Mr. Erickson stated that he was on sight today and was very pleased with the progress. Mr. Erickson thanked the contractors, Reynolds, school district, etc. with the great communication. The Science wing is near completion and things are looking great. Art and Industrial Tech are also progressing well.

Mr. Damion Spahr provided the following detailed update regarding the schedule and contingency:

- On or ahead of schedule
- 18 weeks left will be site work and abatement, 32 weeks of completing the buildings
- High School performance scheduled for this winter has been accommodated and this has turned into a win/win situation for everyone
- Contingency has been managed conservatively
- Analysis of monies has been performed for potential claims
- Parking lot funds withheld - \$50,000
- Contingency exposure has been modified - \$248,000 remaining in original contingency
- Is it enough? It is plenty to get through the construction, however, spending needs to be held down
- Building demolition could still hold hidden costs
- Demolition - vast majority will occur in June, 2009 after school, small piece in January
- Road through school will be completed in September, 2009
- Township has requested parking lot upgrades to an impervious surface (overflow parking)
- Stone parking is available for overflow parking
- Township discussions will take place regarding parking lot surface
- \$50,000 contingency has been set aside for parking area
- \$466,000 worth of improvements have been unfunded mandates
- Reimbursements from state - additional \$500,000

6. **Items for Approval**

a) **Overnight Trips**

Dr. Heble presented the following trips:

- i) Neshaminy High School Jazz Band to MENC All Eastern Division Conference Music Educators National Conference Festival Performance, March 13 – 15 2009 – Providence, Rhode Island

Dr. Heble read an excerpt from a letter:

“The selection of your group was based on the high quality of your submitted recording that was evaluated by a team of highly qualified music educators representing the Entire Eastern Division of MENC.”

There was Board consensus for the trip.

b) Tax Collectors Compensation Program

Mr. Paradise advised that the tax collectors compensation program must be set on or before February 15th. This compensation is set every four years. Mr. Paradise met with the tax collectors and they are requesting a 3% increase per year in their present salary, interim tax bills payment of \$5.00 and installment payments of \$2.03 per installment.

Mr. Paradise provided the Board members with a Tax Collector Salary proposal for the upcoming four years. Mr. Paradise reviewed same with the board.

Mr. Paradise is looking for direction from the Board and this will be placed on the agenda in January, 2009 for approval. It is the school district's obligation under the law to set the salary.

The district is not obligated to increase the salary. This proposal is from the tax collectors. Mr. Paradise advised that tax collectors receive compensation from three sources: County, Municipality and School District.

Mr. Eccles requested to see exactly what has been paid to the Tax Collectors in the preceding two years. Mr. Paradise stated that was provided on the handout last week. The total amount paid to tax collectors in 2009 totals \$102,000 plus the installment costs of approximately \$2,500

Interims have been based on the past year.

Mr. Eccles inquired whether the district is obligated to use tax collectors or can we look for a more efficient system.

Mr. Profy stated that it could be collected by the district, a tax collecting firm, or local elected tax collector, or the bank.

Mr. Paradise stated that the rate charged by the firms will be less than the rate charged by the local elected tax collectors. They perform a community service. Individualized service is given to the residents by local tax collectors.

The salary program must be set for the next four years; however, it can be set however the District chooses.

Mr. Profy stated that you cannot change the compensation of an elected official during the term of his office.

Mr. Webb stated that Bristol Township uses Berkheimer Associates.

Mr. Webb suggested that this matter be placed back with the Finance Committee to look at the options.

c) Contracted Transportation Services for 2008-09

Mr. Paradise advised that private transportation contract needs to be approved yearly. Lakeside Youth Services is the provider for the cost of \$53,187. This is the most efficient and economical way to transport these students.

d) Approval of Possible Tennant for former Tawanka Elementary School Building

Mr. Paradise advised the Board of the I.U.'s interest in leasing the Tawanka School effective July 1, 2009 for a period of 3.5 years. Mr. Paradise provided the Board with a list of talking points from the I.U. Lease amount to be \$6.50 per square foot plus utilities and maintenance. Mr. Paradise advised that he is negotiating to attempt to get \$7.40 per square foot.

The facility currently has evening use by community groups. If the I.U. would become the tenant they have agreed to allow the evening use, however, they do not want to incur the costs associated with same. The district would then be required to hire a custodian, increased cost of utilities, etc.

Mr. Eccles inquired what was the reason for the cost increase per square foot. Mr. Paradise advised that three fair share classrooms exist which would provide a credit to the district. The Realtor stated that it should rent for \$8.50 per square foot; however, this is a real tenant, who is a part of government, who will pay, and will take good care of the property and is in line with our mission statement, but will pay a little less.

Mr. Webb stated that the district would be dealing with one tenant and that is a major point and it is a great thing for the district.

Mr. Eccles is concerned that the district would be leasing a building under fair market value, but they want to charge for our community members to use the building at night. There should be some trade off with them getting the property for \$1.10 under fair market value.

All buildings are being used by community members during the evenings. However, Neshaminy Middle usage has been terminated.

Dr. Spitz is concerned that renting prospects are poor in these economic times.

Mr. Blasch stated that the advantage to the I.U. as the tenant is that they will allow us to use the building for after hours use.

Mr. Eccles feels that every effort should be made to see if the community can use same.

Mr. Paradise stated that a decision needs to be made and the sooner the better so planning can begin on their behalf.

Discussion ensued regarding the times of use and Saturday usage. Details need to be discussed further.

Mr. Koutsouradis inquired whether additional employees would need to be hired to cover the night custodians, or would they be district employees pulled from another school? Mr. Paradise stated that a four hour custodian would be assigned to the building in the evening on a regular basis. This would be protecting our assets.

Mr. Webb stated that the raising of fees for the specific groups is a difficult issue.

There was Board consensus to attempt to reach an Agreement with the I.U.

Mr. Webb suggested that in lieu of the reduced rent they could in turn give the community the use of the building during the evening.

e) Bids/Budget Transfers

Mr. Paradise advised that there is one bid and Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy 09-2) with four transactions.

Bid No. 09-21 HVAC Rooftop air handling unit replacement at Maple Point Middle School
Amount: \$223,586

Replacement of two 16 year old roof top HVAC units. These units are inefficient and are in need of some major repairs to keep them running for the warmer weather when they are used at full capacity.

Mr. Paradise provided a diagram of the rooftop units for the Board's review.

7. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Kadri advised of the following:

- Veteran's Day Celebration at Maple Point and Carl Sandburg were successful
- Field Hockey, Boy's Soccer and Football have made it to State play offs
- High School play situation has been resolved – Construction has been moved up, abatement will be concluded and space will be functioning
- High school transition plan for 9th grade is being formulated
- Piano for high school has been selected

8. Committee Reports

a) Board Policies

No report.

b) Educational Development

Dr. Spitz advised that a meeting took place on October 29th. Lead teachers provided a presentation regarding course selection for 2009/10. Writing and Science PSSA scores were discussed. They do not count towards AYP. Writing scores were very good. Science scores in 4th grade are very high. Eighth grade are not as high and 11th grade are low.

c) Finance/Facilities

Mr. Webb advised that a meeting took place on October 30th with a presentation from a commercial realtor with plans for Neshaminy Middle School. One of the downfalls is that Neshaminy Middle is a very large building to find a single tenant.

Also, the senior citizen tax rebate was discussed. An update was provided on the SWAP and it is in a healthy state. New meeting date to be determined.

d) IU Board

No report.

e) Educational Foundation

Dr. Costanzo advised that the foundation will meet on Monday, November 17th. A successful fundraising event was held raising over \$3,000. The Foundation is continuing to work through the strategic plan and the next meeting will have discussion regarding by-law changes.

f) Technical School

Mr. Koutsouradis advised that the next meeting is scheduled for November 23rd.

g) Technology

Mr. Blasch advised that a meeting took place on October 27th and Kathy Christie attended. Two teachers have attended the technology committee meetings. The electronic grade book was discussed. Bridgetrack will record messages and provide service. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 17th at Lower Southampton Elementary School at 6:00 p.m.

9. Public Comment

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mills, Langhorne, PA, was pleased to hear that the Neshaminy High School production difficulties have been resolved. Further, the Poquessing swimming pool situation was resolved favorably. The students can feel that they can get help from the Administration and School Board.

Mr. Rodos is concerned with the tax collector compensation. Mr. Rodos does not see the need for an increase in salary of 3%. Whoever is to follow up on this matter they should have the figures from private companies regarding their costs to collect taxes.

Mr. Marvin Dickler, Villages of Flowers Mills, Langhorne, PA, stated he would like to see discussions continue on the closure of certain elementary schools. This is November and the public is going to be looking for answers sooner rather than later. Mr. Dickler would like to see to extra curricular activities to continue at Tawanka, however, it is community paying for same. These organizations cannot expect the School Board to keep closing their eyes and paying for them. The district cannot afford to pay for local operations. Costs should be passed on to the users of the buildings.

10. Future Topics

Mr. Kadri discussed the calendar updates for 2009-10 and the meeting dates selected.

11. Agenda Development for the November 25, 2008 Public Meeting

12. Other Board Business

Mrs. Cummings inquired regarding the auction at Neshaminy Middle. Mr. Paradise advised that the district received slightly over \$10,000. Total revenue was approximately \$17,000.

Mr. Webb requested an Executive Session following this meeting in the C & I Room regarding a personnel issue.

Mrs. Cummings advised that the next Strategic Action Meeting will take place at Lower Southampton Elementary on Monday, November 17th.

Dr. Spitz thanked Mr. Paradise and Mr. Minotti for responding to the issues at Neshaminy Middle prior to Election Day. Dr. Spitz also thanked Mrs. Reiser for help during Election Day activities.

13. Adjournment

Mr. Webb moved that the meeting be adjourned and Mrs. Cummings seconded same. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls
Board Secretary