

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
November 9, 2010

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on November 9, 2010 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  
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise  
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan  
Dr. Geeta Heble  
Mr. Kevin Kane

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Ms. Irene Boyle

**OTHERS:** Approximately 65 persons from the public, staff and press

**SECRETARY:** Mrs. Jennifer Burns

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

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Mr. Webb stated that prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held regarding Personnel and Legal issues.

**1. Call to Order**

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

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**3. Announcements**

None

**4. Public Comment**

Jennifer Bouton, financial services, Langhorne, conveyed her continued support for the Board. Ms. Bouton also commented on an article in the Courier Times, entitled, "Leading by Example." The article highlights the efforts of Kathy Brewster, Principal of Albert Schweitzer Elementary School, in her positive leadership in the educational field. Ms. Bouton commented that the article stated that Ms. Brewster leads by example and is a positive influence on children.

Charles Alfonso, semi-retired sales executive, Langhorne, stated that he equates the leadership methods of the NFT with the dictatorship of his former country. Mr. Alfonso expressed his opinion that the majority of teachers in the union are obediently following the leaders, who do not have the best interest of the group as a whole. Mr. Alfonso questioned whether the general membership of the NFT is aware that an executive member of the NFT is scheduled to go on an expense paid European class trip as a chaperone and he questioned why this is not being considered as part of the work to contract action. Mr. Alfonso inferred that the union discriminates between perks and duties when it comes to work to contract. Mr. Alfonso stated that the past action of the teacher disqualifies her from chaperoning Neshaminy students on this trip. He also called for eighth grade parents to unite solidly by refusing to allow the teacher in question to chaperone the trip.

Steve Rodos, semi-retired, Villages of Flower Mills, urged the public to remain civil and respectful when voicing their opinions about the current dispute with the NFT. Mr. Rodos stated that one can have a difference of opinion and still remain respectful of the opposing side. In reference to an article in the Bucks County Courier Times regarding a request for people interested in Charter schools, Mr. Rodos reminded the Board that it would cost approximately one million dollars for every 100 students taken out of Neshaminy for Charter schools. Mr. Rodos expressed his opinion about the various factors that make a successful school. Some of the factors that he listed are, students want to be there, friendly environment, high expectations, and involved staff working together, dedicated teachers, effective discipline, and leadership. Mr. Rodos noted that a successful school cannot be measured by one particular testing session per year.

**5. Items for Approval Tonight**

**a) Overnight Trips**

Dr. Rattigan presented the following trips for approval:

1. Neshaminy High School Cheerleading to a two day cheerleading competition at the Baltimore convention Center, Baltimore, Maryland – February 4-6, 2011
2. Neshaminy High School Cheerleading to a one day cheerleading competition at the Ocean City Convention Center, Ocean City, Maryland – February 26th & 27th, 2011
3. Neshaminy High School Foreign Language Trip to Quebec – April 27th – May 1, 2011

Mr. Eccles inquired if chaperons are going to be available.

Dr. Rattigan assured that there will be coverage.

There was Board consensus for said trips. (Ms. Boyle was not present.)

Mr. Webb made a motion that no student class trips, student program, holiday activity or event, or student extra-circular activity, herein after collectively referred to as student activity, shall be cancelled, rescheduled or materially altered or modified as to activity or duration without the prior approval of the Board of School Directors. The Superintendent of the School District shall timely notify the Board of School Directors of proposed cancellations, rescheduling, alteration or modification of a student activity and if there is insufficient time of the Board of School Directors to act on a proposal, the Board of School Directors authorizes the Board President to act upon the proposal.

Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion.

Mr. O'Connor stated that the reason for this motion is that if an event is cancelled or altered, the Board can give parents and PTO groups ample time to step in and make up for the event.

Mr. Webb acknowledged that is correct.

The Board approved said motion by a vote of eight ayes and zero nays. (Ms. Boyle was not present.)

**6. Items for Approval at the November 23 2010 Public Board Meeting**

**a) Private Transportation Contract for 2010 – 2011**

Mr. Paradise advised that the private transportation contract for Lakeside Youth Services is for six students at \$58.15 per day for an estimated yearly cost of \$62,802.00. Mr. Paradise stated that the Board will be asked to approve the private transportation contract for 2010 -2011 at the November 23 Public Meeting.

**b) Revised and New Board Policies**

Dr. Rattigan presented the following policies for Board consideration:

- Revised Board Policy #129 – Open Records
- Revised Board Policy #528 - Communicable Disease Prevention
- New Board Policy #228 – Communicable Disease Prevention
- New Board Policy #328 – Communicable Disease Prevention
- New Board Policy #428 – Communicable Disease Prevention

Dr. Rattigan advised that Policy #129 – Open Records is necessary due to the fact that the Pennsylvania Legislature enacted Act 3 of 2008. The Act amended Pennsylvania's Open Records Law to provide regulations for access to public records and to impose the requirement on the school district to establish a written open records policy complying with the requirements and adopting the procedure required by the Act. Dr. Rattigan stated that Policy #528 – Communicable Disease Prevention (formally Policy #517) was revised to include all communicable diseases. Dr. Rattigan also stated that Policy #228, 328, and 428 – Communicable Disease Prevention are new policies (similar to the student Policy 528) that have been created for administrative, certified and support staffs.

Mr. Webb stated that this will be an agenda item at the November 23 Public Meeting.

**c) Bids/Budget Transfers**

Mr. Paradise advised that there were no bids and one Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy – 11-2) for the reimbursement of the theft/loss of the Abington Senior High School football team belongings at the September 24, 2010 game at Neshaminy High School in the amount of \$4,940.

Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy – 11-2) will be presented at the November 23 Public Meeting for approval.

**7. Committee Reports**

**a) Board Policies**

Ms. Boyle was not present.

**b) Educational Development**

Mr. O'Connor informed the Board that the committee met on October 18 and discussed what can be used to enhance the computer education program in the elementary schools. Mr. Abramson reported that an expanded curriculum pilot program is currently taking place in two 4th grade classes at Poquessing. After assessing the viability of this pilot program this year the committee will look to expand into 4th and 5th grade across several of the other elementary schools next year. Mr. O'Connor stated that by using this program the students will be able to use appropriate technology vocabulary, use common features of an operating system, create documents with advanced tech formatting and graphics using word processing, construct spreadsheets, entering data, and how to conduct searches using information with online tools and much more. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 15 at 6:30 p.m.

**c) Finance/Facilities**

Mr. Webb advised the Board that there have been two finance/facilities meetings since the last Board meeting. They discussed solar energy and the immediate improvement needs in some of the buildings. He also stated that they interviewed several insurance brokers. The next meeting will be held on Monday, November 15 at 7:00 p.m., which they will be interviewing several more insurance brokers and also another solar company will be making a presentation.

**d) IU Board**

Mrs. Cummings informed the Board that at their last meeting programs and services provided by the IU were discussed and different presentations were given by members. The BCIU continues to provide the district with a variety of professional educational opportunities such as workshops, programs and regional conferences. The IU provides speakers that reduce costs and also offers video conferences.

There was an approval between the IU, Neshaminy School District, and Today Incorporated from July 2010, to July 30, 2011. The next scheduled meeting is November 16 at 7:00 p.m., at the Tawanka Learning Center.

**e) Education Foundation**

Dr. Muenker announced that the committee met on November 8 and their quest is to continue to support seniors and provide scholarships for students. The Flyers Basket will be raffled off on Monday, November 15.

**f) Technical School**

Mr. Koutsouradis informed the Board that at their last meeting, the principal, Connie Rinker, stated that due to the fact that AYP hasn't been made, the administration will be doing studies on other technical schools to determine how AYP can be reached. No progress has been made with negotiations between the technical teachers and the technical Board.

**g) Technology**

Mr. Congdon advised the Board that at their last meeting, which was on October 20 future technology in the classroom was discussed and how the curriculum will support the new technology. The next meeting is not yet scheduled.

**h) Ad Hoc Facilities**

Mr. O'Connor informed the Board that a meeting was held on October 11 with Vern McKissick of McKissick Associates. The committee stated its desire for an updated facilities usage study to ensure the buildings are being used to their potential. It was reported that Mr. McKissick stated that he could update his analysis of our facilities and he has provided a statement of work pertaining to that study. Mr. O'Connor will ask that at the next meeting a motion be added to the agenda to authorize McKissick & Associates to proceed with that study. If approved, the study could be made for review by February, 2011, at which time additional meetings could be set up to go over that data. All meetings will be open to the public. Mr. O'Connor also stated that no buildings will be closed for the 2011 - 2012 school year due to the legal requirements of notification to the public. Any recommendations for any closings would be for the 2012 - 2013 school year at the earliest.

**8. Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Muenker advised the Board on the following:

- Neshaminy High School's Interact Club will sponsor a Pajama collection for the holidays. Donations of new pajamas will be collected until December 17, at Neshaminy High School to be distributed to area families and The Salvation Army.
- Neshaminy High School's Drama Department presents the Children's Hour. Performances will be held November 17, 18, and 19, at 7 p.m. in the Black Box Theater; all seats are \$5:00.
- On October 27, the NHS Roadies performed their annual Halloween show, "Spooky and Kooky". All proceeds were donated to the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation. The \$1,100.00 will be donated on behalf of Ryan Kunick, a junior at the high school, who lives with Juvenile Diabetes every day.
- Poquessing Middle School's Family and Consumer Science students created blankets for cancer and dialysis patients during their treatments and stays at the hospital.
- Pearl Buck Elementary School recently held the second annual Coin Race, which raised almost \$2,000 for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.
- High School S.P.I.N. organization will meet Wednesday, November 10. Topics will include JPA, PSSA, co-curricular news, and gym night, which will be held on March 4, and 5, 2011.
- Neshaminy is hosting a playoff football game Friday, November 12, against Upper Dublin.
- Powder Puff football game will be held Tuesday, November 23, at 6:30 p.m., at Neshaminy's stadium.
- A Veteran's Day Program will be held November 22 at the Carl Sandburg Middle School at 9:40 a.m. to honor all veterans. All veterans who plan on attending can R.S.V.P. to Carl Sandburg Middle School.

- Maple Point will be hosting a Veteran's Day Program on November 23 at 10:30 a.m. More information will be posted on the website.
- American Education Week will be held the week of November 15. Information can be found on the website.
- Anyone interested in volunteering for the S.A.G.E. Program can contact their local school principal.

#### **9. Public Comment**

Larry Pastor, Business Executive, Langhorne, took exception to the comments of a previous speaker regarding respect and civility toward the NFT. Mr. Pastor stated that the behavior by members of the NFT has been accurately described in the blogs and the community is merely standing up to the aggressive behavior of the teachers. Mr. Pastor said that the teachers have not displayed civility by the work to contract action, teacher on teacher altercation in the classroom, and when the two union leaders spoke out in hostility toward the School Board at public meetings. Mr. Pastor requested that the Board make public the numbers of the NFT's counteroffer and possibly publish the numbers in the Bucks County Courier Times. Mr. Pastor also asked what policy was utilized in the action against the teacher who was reprimanded for bullying. He urged the members not to change the executive positions of the School Board during the upcoming reorganization in December. Mr. Pastor voiced his support for Mr. Webb as president stating that Mr. Webb has been a great representative. Mr. Pastor concluded that parents and taxpayers are welcome to attend a peaceful parent protest on November 13 at the Eisenhower Elementary School from 12 - 3p.m.

Samantha Blasch, Neshaminy High School student, expressed her frustration and disappointment regarding the ongoing work to contract action in the high school. Ms. Blasch stated that she and many other students have become disillusioned with the teachers because of their lack of caring. She stated that help is no longer available after school and she questioned why students should care when the teachers apparently do not care.

Mark Shubin, sales executive, Langhorne, asked the Board if an agenda has been agreed upon for the upcoming December 2 negotiations meeting. Mr. Shubin commended the Board on their level of professionalism, transparency, and articulation of the issues to the community. Mr. Shubin declared that the NFT is spending an abundance of funds for negative advertisements in the newspaper against the School Board. He said that the teachers are basically using this venue to call the School Board liars and this is not the way to successfully negotiate. Mr. Shubin asked what kind of corporate outreach and fundraising has the district done. He stated that this has been successful in other districts in raising funds for scholarships, funding programs, and improving technology.

Marvin Dickler, retired, Villages of Flower Mills, Langhorne, complimented the Board for their exemplary service and declared that they have been the most outstanding School Board in the last eight years. Mr. Dickler inquired why the Board has not made public the intention of selling the Neshaminy Middle School property.

Charles Alfonso, semi-retired sales executive, Langhorne, read about teacher responsibility from Article 1041 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, in reference to a previous speaker commenting that teachers are not available to students for after school help. The Article states that, "The Federation shall encourage all staff members to provide service beyond the regular school day to participate in programs designed to improve teaching skills, as well as, help and council children." Mr. Alfonso requested that the Board conduct a thorough criminal investigation on all teachers and administrators and the results be put in each individual's personnel file.

#### **10. Future Topics**

None

#### **11. Agenda Development for the November 23 2010 Public Board Meeting**

None

**12. Board Comment**

Mr. Webb thanked the administrators and principals for honoring Veterans on Veteran's Day. Mr. Webb noted that this year the teachers will not be associated with that project. Mr. Webb confirmed that the NFT's counteroffer would be an estimated 35% increase and retro pay would cost the district 11 million dollars. Mr. Webb further stated that insurance costs are up 15.5 % as of today's date. Mr. Webb thanked Mr. Pastor for his vote of confidence and stated that the position of Board President will be decided upon by the members of the School Board at the reorganization meeting. Mr. Webb verified that an agenda will be followed at the negotiations meeting and that agenda item will be self insurance of the prescription plan. Mr. Webb confirmed that the Board is actively seeking a buyer for the Neshaminy Middle School; however, due to the present real estate market the prospects are limited.

Mr. O'Connor clarified that the self-insured prescription plan is an estimated rough savings to the district is about 1.3 million dollars annually and the employees will still maintain a Rolls Royce health plan and prescription plan.

Mr. Congdon offered an apology to the Neshaminy student who spoke stating that the Board is doing everything possible to bring an end to the work to contract

Mr. Webb responded to the question regarding disciplinary policy stating that on the advice of counsel, Board members cannot discuss personnel issues.

**13. Adjournment of Meeting**

Mr. O'Connor moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Jennifer Burns  
Board Secretary