

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING
PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
February 10, 2009

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on February 10, 2009, in the Board Room of the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Ritchie Webb, President
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Vice-President
Mr. Joseph Blasch
Ms. Irene M. Boyle
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Richard M. Eccles
Mr. Frank J. Koziol
Dr. William H. Spitz

ADMINISTRATORS:

Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Dr. Geeta A. Heble
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan
Mrs. Patricia Boylan

BOARD MEMBER NOT PRESENT:

Mr. William D. O'Connor

OTHERS:

Approximately 29 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Anita E. Walls

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

1. Call to Order

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

2. Pledge of Allegiance

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

3. Announcements

Mr. Webb announced that Mr. O'Connor was out of town.

Dr. Muenker acknowledged the loss of a public servant, Detective Chris Jones. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Suzanne and his children. Fundraising efforts are underway in our schools. Contributions can be made payable to the Philadelphia Police and Fire Federal Credit Union.

4. Public Comment

Mr. Solis Basen, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, welcomed back Ms. Boyle. Mr. Basen remarked to Administrators, teachers, parents of school children, business manager and all the residents of Neshaminy School District. Mr. Basen wanted to enlighten everyone to the fact they we are in a recession. Think about the following words: unemployment, lost revenue, health care, foreclosures, inflation, fixed income, inefficiency. If you have any questions on those words Mr. Basen will try to explain their meaning. Most people know what we are up against this year.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA. Stated that it seems the school district has created a fantastic alternative education program through the efforts of both the Administration, Ms. Holland and her staff. Three alternatives are being considered: send students to other schools and pay an exorbitant price; refurbish a portion of Eisenhower (not housed students in 30 years) refurbish a portion of an old high school (scheduled to be demolished in a week). Tells you the quality of these spaces. None of these solutions are good. Listen to the educators. This decision should be based on education. Make a decision based on education values.

Mr. Rodos also addressed the budget. How can we have a \$2.9M increase in salaries from instructional programs? \$2.3M for Support services? How can we account for \$1.7M to increase building improvement services? Discrepancy in busing of \$3M between Neshaminy spending \$10M and getting reimbursed \$1.8M and Pennsbury who spends \$8M in transportation costs and gets reimbursed \$2.9M. They have greater square miles. Pennsbury runs buses all day between their high school buildings. Our proposed budget has a \$331,000 increase for transportation. Mr. Rodos feels we should be spending on education and not transportation.

Mr. Marvin Dickler, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that the Tawanka program has been successful but discussion on where to house the program in improbable places is a waste of time. State standards will need to be met wherever you house them. Mr. Dickler stated that he has never heard anyone not respect the majority of teachers that are in Neshaminy School District. Why with all these excellent teachers are we not able to turn around the test scores competitively against the other districts in our area? Monetary expenditures with teachers are still an issue and it would not have to affect the teaching in the classroom. Decisions need to be made. Elections will be upcoming for new Board members. Vacant seats will be available and qualified people will need to take these vacancies. Hopefully, all board members will consider staying on the Board since Mr. Dickler feels that the Board is finally beginning to work together for the benefit of the children.

5. Items for Discussion

a) **High School Construction Update**

Mr. Paradise introduced Mr. Damion Spahr who provided the following update:

- Project is ahead of schedule with last addition
- New construction reviewed last month will be turned over in May
- Renovations are near the end
- Contingency exposure has changed by only \$25,000
- Holding tight to budget

Mr. Koziol commented on the great look of the high school and the great job that is being done. Mr. Webb was also amazed at the project and it is coming together beautifully.

b) **McKissick Presentation Elementary Building Utilization**

Mr. Paradise noted that this is an update from over the past two years which could have changed the bottom line result of the study performed in the past. This presentation is based upon every elementary school and its use today.

A power point presentation was provided which demonstrated enrollment projections, district facilities, capacity and enrollment, and PDE projections.

Talking Points:

- Elimination of modular classrooms, improved district wide utilization after District subdivided rooms with permanent walls. Approximately 8% change.
- Four additional elementary classrooms shifted to IU special education use, reducing available elementary capacity.
- Elimination of Neshaminy Middle School reduced capacity at 6-9 level, but the District still has excess capacity. This will worsen as the 9th grade is moved to the high school in the fall of 2009.
- Study now reflects 9-12 structure, not the current 10-12 at the high school.
- Middle school buildings and their use of rooms were not revisited.
- Normal change in use picked up at elementary schools. Most buildings have new principals and room uses have changed.
- Class sizes still an issue, although rooms appear to be more fully used.

- Full day vs. ½ day kindergarten issue needs to be decided.
- 10% excess capacity should be goal at elementary level.
- Efficiency of pull out spaces: too few kids in too large a room?
- MA has been more aggressive in excluding pull out classrooms (special education) from practical capacity.
- Not revisited development planning or in works, but would question its use in the current economy and have excluded it from the projection model.
- Enrollment Picture – PDE has revised it's birth projections
 1. In 2006, PDE projected almost 7,726 in 2014-15
 2. In 2009, PDE projects 8,570 in 2014-15
 3. A difference of 844 pupils
- Projections had shown 8171 in 2014-2015 for K-12. Now showing 8,427 in 2014-2015, a difference of 256 pupil difference or 3.1% more pupils.
- In summary, on a half K-12 district wide basis we are seeing 11,030 practical capacity vs. 8,820 current enrollment (Nov.08) or 79.96% utilization.
- In 2012-13, half K-12 utilization will be 11,030 vs. 8,541 or 77.43%.
- In 2017-18, half K-12 utilization will be 11,030 vs. 8,302 or 75.27%.

Next Steps: Refine the Boards previously selected options.
Determine cost effectiveness beyond construction
Determine the impact on debt service for building upgrades

c) Budget Development
Forum for Discussion
Update on process

2009-2010 Preliminary Budget document provided to Board members.

Mr. Paradise advised that the Preliminary Budget is exactly the same as the Working Draft budget. Mr. Paradise pointed out to Board members page 2 which contained the current enrollment and page 4 contains Enrollment of all Educational Facilities. Note: that there are 611 students that the district is required to provide education that are in other facilities.

Internal happenings are on a constant basis. Staff needs to know that this is a serious budget issue for this upcoming year. Concern is how to approach this problem. A resolution must be reached.

Mr. Paradise suggested that the Strategic Board Meetings concentrate on the budget from now till the end of June. Nine board members will be able to provide input at all times. Mr. Paradise provided Board members with a list of items suggested to date that could be potential savings ideas.

Mr. Eccles requested what percentage of the budget makes up personnel. Mr. Paradise responded approximately 80%. The Board is being asked to spend a great deal of time working on 20% of the budget which could only ensue cutting programs. How can we move forward when we are not making progress with the negotiations of the teacher's contract?

Mr. Webb stated that negotiations are ongoing.

Mr. Paradise noted that included in the 20% are contributions to the Tech School and IU special education, debt service, etc. which the district has very little control of.

Mr. Eccles is concerned that the extra meetings will only allow the Board to really look at possibly 10% of the budget since the other huge percentage is the contracted services and items the district cannot control.

Dr. Spitz is in favor of the meetings; however, further information would be necessary at the meetings which would be provided by the Administration in order that the Board could make some difficult decisions. Dr. Spitz would like to see the potential savings from each item listed so that time could be concentrated on the items which could have the most potential savings.

Mr. Paradise noted that there is currently a \$14M budget deficit. We only have a few months and the Administration is not in a position to cut that amount from the budget. Mr. Paradise is trying to heighten the level of concern.

Mr. Paradise noted that every computer in the district is already being "put to sleep" after one hour after use by an individual.

Mr. Paradise noted that these first level decisions must be made early:

- Determine if we will have any full day kindergarten
- Closure of facilities: elementary or middle
- Board funding plans for CBA negotiation
- Staffing estimates for grades 6-8
- Staffing inclusion of grade 9 at high school
- Staffing grades 9-12 at high school

Mr. Eccles reiterated that the contract needs to reach a settlement. Until the taxpayers get involved, nothing will happen. This is the top priority.

There was Board consensus to have the Board Strategic Committee Meetings to discuss budgetary items.

Mr. Webb announced that there is a Facility/Finance Meeting in the Board Room tomorrow night.

The first Board Strategic Committee Meeting relating to the budget would be held on Wednesday, February 25th. The future meetings would be held on Mondays in order to accommodate the majority of Board members.

6. Items for Approval

a) Approval of the 2009-2010 Preliminary Budget

Motion: Adoption of the 2009-10 Preliminary Budget

Mr. Blasch presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, in accordance with Act 1 of 2006, the Board of School Directors has received a Proposed Preliminary Budget for the 2009-2010 fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, the Proposed Preliminary Budget was made available for public inspection on form PDE-2028 effective January 19, 2009; and

WHEREAS, in order to further comply with Act 1, the Preliminary Budget must be adopted by the Board of School Directors on or before February 18, 2009; and

WHEREAS, Act 1 further provides for "referendum exceptions", which must be submitted to and approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education on or before March 5, 2009.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2009-10 Preliminary Budget is adopted in accordance with Act 1 of 2006 and it shall be made available for public inspection as required by law.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the School District shall apply to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for exceptions specified under Act 1 as per the attached summary. (See Attachment A).

Dr. Spitz seconded the motion.

Mr. Koziol wished to amend the last paragraph to state "shall not apply to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for exceptions".

Mr. Profy stated that there needs to be a second to the motion to amend. Mr. Blasch seconded the motion.

Mr. Paradise highly recommended that you not make this amendment because no one knows what will happen between now and June. It is clear that it is not a desired path and it is clear from past history that the Board does not want to go that way, however, things could get dramatically worse before June and the Board should not cut off options. This does not mean that these exceptions would be utilized in any way shape or form, but if this step is not taken the district will have no ability. Mr. Paradise believes in keeping the options open.

Dr. Spitz noted that the budget is "balancing" only because of the utilization of the exceptions at this point.

Mr. Webb noted that last year the Board made a motion amongst itself not to use the exceptions. Mr. Webb feels the Board should follow Mr. Paradise's recommendation.

Mr. Webb requested a roll call vote on the motion to amend. The roll call tally indicated that the motion failed by a vote of three ayes (Mr. Blasch, Mr. Eccles, Mr. Koziol) and five nays (Ms. Boyle, Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Koutsouradis, Dr. Spitz and Mr. Webb). Mr. O'Connor was not present.

Mr. Webb requested a roll call vote on the original motion presented. The roll call tally indicated that the motion passed by a vote of five ayes (Ms. Boyle, Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Koutsouradis, Dr. Spitz and Mr. Webb) and three nays (Mr. Blasch, Mr. Eccles, Mr. Koziol). Mr. O'Connor was not present.

Mr. Koziol made a motion that it is the goal of Neshaminy School Board not to use the exceptions specified under Act 1.

Mr. Webb seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously passed the motion. Mr. O'Connor was not present.

b) Re-location of Alternative School

Mr. Webb made a motion to move the Neshaminy Alternative Program to the High School Belc Area.

Ms. Boyle seconded the motion.

Board discussion ensued regarding said motion.

Mr. Blasch stated that this seems to be the best location and no other choice was really acceptable for the program.

Mrs. Cummings noted that the main concerns that she has heard is the need for a permanent location, meaning the program will stay within Neshaminy School District.

Dr. Spitz stated it is a very difficult issue for the Board. Concerns about educational issues still exist. Confidentiality of students, anxiety of being on a large campus, physical space issues, and severe budget constraints, etc.

Dr. Muenker stated that space issues will be addressed and discussions regarding same will go forward. Dr. Spitz is concerned that there is not a firm commitment to providing the space. Dr. Spitz will support same in the interest of moving the program forward.

Mr. Koziol feels that these students do go home at night, have friends and peers and being closer to the high school could be beneficial if they would like to take some courses at the high school and possibly give them the interest to get back into the high school atmosphere.

The Board unanimously passed the motion. Mr. O'Connor was not present.

c) Overnight Trips

Dr. Rattigan presented the following trips:

- i) Maple Point Middle School to the PA State Future Business Leaders of America Competition and Leadership Conference – March 30 to April 1, 2009, Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, Hershey, PA
- ii) Neshaminy High School To the PA State Future Business Leaders of America Competition and Leadership Conference – March 30 to April 1, 2009, Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, Hershey, PA

There was Board consensus for said trips.

Mr. Blasch questioned whether there was a Future Business Leaders of America Club at Poquessing Middle School. The answer was no. Mr. Blasch feels that this should be made available at every middle school.

d) Acceptance of the 2007-2008 Audit

Mr. Paradise advised that there will be a motion at the end of the month to formally accept the audit of the 2007-2008 school year.

e) BCIU #22 2009-10 Programs & Services and Instructional Materials & Research Budget

Dr. Muenker advised that at the end of the month there will be a motion to formally accept the 2009-2010 Programs & Services and Instructional Materials & Research Budget for the Bucks County Schools Intermediate Unit #22. The budget is in the amount of \$1.9M. Neshaminy's contribution is about \$106,000.

Mr. Paradise advised that services are purchased from the I.U. for less money since it is a collective group. Prices are determined by the I.U. A member of the I.U. can come and speak with Board members.

The Board was in agreement to have a representative from the I.U. come to Neshaminy and speak with Board members.

f) Approval of Revised and New Board Policies

- Revised Board Policy #553 – Bullying/Cyberbullying
- Revised Board Policy #536 – Administration of Medicine
- New Board Policy #131 – Participation in Public Meetings through use of Electronic Communication Equipment

Mr. Webb requested that Board Policy #131 be tabled at the request of Mr. O'Connor. There was no Board objection.

Dr. Rattigan presented the two revised Board Policy #553 and #536 for Board consideration. Both of these policies would be voted upon at the end of the month.

g) Bids/Budget Transfers

Mr. Paradise presented the following bid:

Bid No. 10-10 Email Archive Equipment

Bid Amount: \$36,125.00

The bid is for email archiving system needed in order to comply with new Right to Know Law as it relates to storage, archival and retrieval of all District email.

Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy 09-4) with six transactions.

Mr. Koziol discussed storage devices and ease of access methods. Mr. Koziol discussed the ability to store items on servers or terabyte devices to store information which is an inexpensive storage method.

Mr. Paradise noted that this is a completely separate piece of equipment that sits besides the e-mail server with its own set of rules and regulations.

Mr. Profy stated that this is an evolution out of the United States Supreme Court decision that pertains to federal rule of civil procedure. System is designed to preserve the very email which one or both parties to the transaction don't want for purposes of not having it discoverable in lawsuits, don't want same to be retained. This equipment will automatically retain same. This needs to be done in order to comply with the court rules.

7. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Muenker advised of the following:

- Musicals: Poquessing – Beauty and the Beast, February 18 – February 21. Neshaminy High School – Fame, February 11 – February 14
- Martin Luther King Day commemorated Meals distributed to Aids for Friends
- Future Business Leaders of America – 51 students placed or won
- National Sign Day took place at the high school
- National School Counseling week February 2-6
- Course selection for 8th & 9th grades
- Staffing assignments are underway for the new transition with 9th grade moving to high school

8. Committee Reports

a) Board Policies

Ms. Boyle advised that the next meeting will take place on February 24th at 6:00 p.m. Discussion will include high school graduation requirements, course catalog, and minimum number of students for each class.

b) Educational Development

Dr. Spitz advised that the next meeting will be scheduled shortly.

c) Finance/Facilities

Mr. Koziol advised that a meeting will take place on February 11th.

d) IU Board

Dr. Spitz advised that the next meeting will take place next week.

e) Educational Foundation

Dr. Muenker stated that the Ed Foundation is having a Phillies Basket fundraiser for Spring. The basket will go district wide.

f) Technical School

Mr. Koutsouradis advised that on January 26th a great dinner was served. Ribbon cutting for new auditorium. Next meeting is February 23rd at 8:00 p.m.

g) Technology

Mr. Blasch advised that the meeting was cancelled.

9. Public Comment

Mr. Solis Basen, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, complemented the Board for having additional meetings to discuss the budget. Mr. Basen stated that a middle school was closed; closing of Tawanka, many retirements, drop in enrollment and the budget is going up \$14M. Where does the problem exist?

Mrs. Cheryl Glover, Laurel Oaks, stated that she has a son who attends the Alternative Program at Tawanka and he has no intent to go to college. Mrs. Glover feels bad about some of the comments made this evening toward the students in the Alternative program. Everyone does not need to go to college. Mrs. Glover is happy with the program and wants same to continue. The point is that many of the students in the alternative program do not need to see the students at the high school or feel they need to be near them.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated the Preliminary budget of this year and last year is almost identical. Cuts need to be made. Glad board will get together and go line by line.

10. Future Topics

Mr. Webb would like to see in policy committee that the Board should vote upon any agreement with any bargaining unit. There was Board consensus to send same to Policy committee.

11. Agenda Development for the February 24, 2009 Public Meeting

12. Other Board Business

Mr. Paradise noted that the budget has a \$14M gap caused by the lack of revenue and the lack of fund balance. This is causing the large gap.

Mr. Blasch commented on the Stimulus Package and funding for public education. Mr. Paradise advised that the PDE asked for information to relay to the federal government for capital projects. Mr. Paradise submitted \$51M of ideas. Senate has already possibly cut same out.

Dr. Spitz commented on the Alternative Education program and Dr. Spitz knows that some people are still very disappointed, however, he will work very hard to assure that this program continue at the high level it has been and the space and other support will be gotten. The program is too good to let it fail.

13. Adjournment

Mr. Eccles moved that the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Blasch seconded same. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls
Board Secretary