

Neshaminy School District  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
(WORK SESSION)  
September 14, 2004

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on September 14 2004, in the Board Room of the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

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

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

Mr. P. Howard Wilson  
Dr. Louis T. Muenker  
Dr. Sandra Costanzo  
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise  
Mrs. Jacqueline Rattigan  
Mr. Bruce M. Wyatt

**BOARD MEMBER NOT PRESENT:**

Mrs. Sue C. Barrett

**SOLICITOR:**

Thomas J. Profy, IV, Esquire

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

**OTHERS:** Approximately 10 persons from the public, staff and press

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Prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held to discuss personnel issues.

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Eccles called the meeting to order at 7:14 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**

No public comment.

Mr. Bowman made a motion to suspend the agenda to add the approval of the contract of the district's Assistant Superintendent. Mr. Webb seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

**5. Items for Discussion**

**a) Phillip H. Mowry, P.E., President – PHM Associates, Inc.**

Mr. Paradise introduced Mr. Mowry of PHM Associates, Inc. who presented a report to the Finance Committee and the board asked him to return and present the report to the full board and the public.

Mr. Mowry's charge was very specific and limited with respect to the project. Mr. Mowry was to perform an onsite review of the facility to determine what the existing conditions were and the

functionality of the layout, the architectural, electrical, mechanical, plumbing details, etc. Mr. Mowry was to review prior documentation which included a couple of reports from BASCO Associates that were several years old and documentation from ATS&R relative to their educational planning and design of the proposed high school which was up for review during the past year. Mr. Mowry was asked to look at the impact of the inclusion of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade in the high school, not from an educational standpoint, however, what that did to the proposed designs relative to cost, space requirements, etc. Mr. Mowry was to provide a report on his findings, comments and recommendations relative to all the prior documentation and what Mr. Mowry saw was the appropriate way to proceed for the future.

Mr. Mowry is an engineer who has been around the construction business all his life. Mr. Mowry has been involved in school facility maintenance planning for 32 years. Mr. Mowry looks at school facilities with a lot of background that is pragmatic in nature, what works as opposed to design and concepts. Mr. Mowry tends to be fairly practical in his approach. Mr. Mowry has spent his life in school buildings from the perspective of making them work, after they have been constructed, more so than initial design work.

Mr. Mowry is to provide an independent “outsiders view” of what has occurred and where the district can go from here. Mr. Mowry is not questioning or prejudging other design professionals.

Mr. Mowry provided a few main points (planning parameters):

- Neshaminy School District is in a period of declining enrollment.
- Neshaminy High School does not provide all the spaces desirable and necessary for the current educational program and projected that in the future that it will not get any better.
- Situations in the high school need immediate attention.
- Declining enrollment is a plus which enables the district to come up with a plan in an orderly fashion in order to include the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 9<sup>th</sup> grade can be fit into the high school.

Neshaminy School District requires additional space for the Science program, staff preparation areas, physical education and the athletic program.

Prior renovations began to allow the staff to congregate and prepare for their educational preparation (Flexible instructional space).

Capacity:

- Excess capacity is available at the middle space.
- Ability to make changes exist.

Existing condition of High School:

- The facility is in fair/poor condition with the exception of several areas that have already been renovated in recent years.
- These renovations however do not lend themselves to efficient reuse in the plan.
- The facility is basically original construction – 40-50 years old.
- The facility is pushing its life expectancy.
- Maintenance has caused this building to have such a long life.
- The following systems need attention and there is not much you can do in the way of maintenance:
  - ✓ HVAC
  - ✓ Mechanical
  - ✓ Electrical
  - ✓ Plumbing
- Codes are an issue; however, there are presently no unsafe conditions at the facility.

- Heating system is in three parts – One unit is in reasonable condition and still has some life expectancy. The other two units are well passed their life and the systems need to be brought to current standards.
- Air conditioning would be required – Mr. Mowry is a proponent of 4 pipe system.
- Heating piping has been well maintained and may be able to be reused during renovation.
- The main construction and walls are well passed its prime and there is great energy loss due to this. Ceilings need to come out.
- Security issues associated with the building include 80-90 doors.

Mr. Mowry reviewed the BASCO Associates report of March, 2002:

- Five levels of conditions and Mr. Mowry agrees with their assessment of the facility conditions (well founded).
- \$130 square foot construction price for new high school construction in PA for 2002 was low.
- 295,000 square foot high school is substantially low for 2,500 to 3,000 pupils would approximate 100 sq. foot per pupil – Mr. Mowry is seeing 150-200 square foot per pupil in most buildings today.
- Somewhat low cost per square foot estimate with a very low size of high school would tilt the deck toward construction of a new high school, as opposed to the other options.
- Discounted any emotional or historical attachment to the original building.

Mr. Mowry reviewed the ATS&R work:

- Substantial amount of planning went into the high school design – Mr. Mowry visited Parkland High School.
- Sufficient guidelines and constraints with respect to the educational parameters and financial parameters were not provided to ATS&R.
- Size of the building (443,000 square feet) and the cost of construction increases.
- Common area space large – corridors, atriums, entrance halls.
- Science labs – generous size.
- Athletic/physical education department (3 gymnasiums).

Mr. Mowry's suggestions to bring costs down are to move into renovations of existing spaces. If the school were downsized to 350,000 square feet it could probably be done for \$70-\$75M. However, it would change dramatically the planning process.

Mr. Mowry noted that inclusion of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade from an educational prospective made sense. Staff savings would be reflected; a middle school could become a rental property, etc. Mr. Mowry's report is based on inclusion of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Mr. Mowry feels a combination of renovation and new construction for the high school:

- Retain the auditorium (however, renovations will occur in every area to make the building one whole system for fire, heat, security, etc.).
- Retain and renovate the Cafeteria, Kitchen and Library sections.
- Construction of two story addition to increase space and allow for better communication.
- Retain and renovate the Art section.
- Retain and renovate Gym 3.
- Retain and renovate district offices and associated spaces in E wing.
- Demolish F corridor, G corridor, north A corridor and replace with new two story classroom addition adjacent to the existing A, B & C corridor.
- Demolish lower A wing section and replace with two story science classroom connected to the E and G corridor.
- Retain and renovate Gym 1 and associated spaces.
- Retain and renovate Gym 2 and Business Educational Center.

- Retain and renovate E, D and upper A sections.
- Retain and renovate B & C wings.
- Completely renovate the HVAC, plumbing, electrical systems (except boiler room 3).

Mr. Mowry has itemized the costs according to renovating the good sections, fair sections, poor sections, demolition costs, new construction costs (\$150.00 sq. ft.), and site development from the ATS&R report, asbestos removal per district consultant, allocation for furnishing and equipment are conservative. Mr. Mowry has a total construction cost of \$55.7M plus soft costs, architect and engineering fees, construction management fees, legal, rental of portable space, etc. The total project cost for a 404,000 square foot building of approximately \$72M. The added costs for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade are insignificant. The core space needed for a facility of that size will be able to accommodate the 9<sup>th</sup> graders. Another 25,000 square feet of additional classroom space this is approximately \$5M. The 9<sup>th</sup> graders are a simple part of the equation. The question is where and how they are put into the building.

Summary:

- Rethink the process.
- Do not delay the process – high school has needs now and more money will just be needed as time goes on.
- Fairly inefficient building in terms of layout and student movement.
- Combination of renovation and new construction can occur of a 400,000 square foot building for approximately \$70M.
- \$70M is a 2004 figure – conservative and safe.

Mr. Webb confirmed that the \$70M figure does include inclusion of the 9<sup>th</sup> graders.

Ms. Drioli clarified that for 20 weeks the board sat and listened to the community berate the board, accuse the board of improper activities regarding the maintenance of this building. Mr. Mowry is stating that this building has been properly maintained. Some accusations by the public toward the board leaned toward criminal. Previous boards and previous administrations have done a fine job of maintaining the high school building. Ms. Drioli noted that Mr. Mowry has stated that the district has gotten a useful life out of the building and well beyond the life expectancy of some of the mechanical, boilers, etc.

Ms. Drioli questioned regarding the “poor” condition of the high school could parents demand the township, department of health, etc. to condemn certain area of the building due to the poor condition.

Mr. Mowry did not see any of those types of conditions.

Dr. Spitz had a number of items for the record:

- Space size for specific areas are considerably lower in Mr. Mowry’s report (including special education, staff support, administrative services, etc.).
- Identify areas which would need attention, however, is it an exhaustive list.
- Reduce size to 350,000 sq. feet which is a very low number per student.
- Dollar estimates are for 2004 – Proposal however is a 4-5 renovation program (inclusion of inflation for construction that will be happening 4-5 years from now). Is \$72M figure a safe figure?
- Technology is not included in the costs.
- Security issues.

Mr. Mowry noted that this is a concept plan and the district may want additional changes which will make changes to the square foot prices. Mr. Mowry’s figures are cautious in order to provide maneuvering of space.

Mr. Wyatt commended Mr. Mowry for his work done at the high school facility. The four days that he spent at the high school has provided a very accurate report and his ideas and recommendations for the building are very much on target for the board to review.

Ms. Drioli noted that this is not as far fetched as from the original concept that the people proposed initially. This report is pretty much what the board has tried to communicate to the public and what the building status presently reflects. Ms. Drioli thanked Mr. Mowry for his validation.

## **6. Items for Approval**

### **a) Overnight Trips**

- i. **King of the Mountain Wrestling Tournament – Neshaminy High School to Central Mountain High School, Lock Haven, PA, December 17-18, 2004**
- ii. **Boardwalk Beach Classic – Neshaminy High School Girls' Basketball Team to Wildwood, NJ – December 29-30, 2004**
- iii. **Wrestling Tournament – Neshaminy High School to Manheim High School, December 29-30, 2004**
- iv. **Cumberland Valley Wrestling Tournament – Neshaminy High School to Cumberland Valley High School – January 7-8, 2005**
- v. **Foreign Language Trip – Neshaminy High School to Quebec – April 13 - 17, 2005**
- vi. **Junior Class Trip – Neshaminy High School to Virginia and Washington, D.C., April 16 - 18, 2005**
- vii. **History Club Trip – Neshaminy High School to Boston, Mass./Newport, RI, May 20-22, 2005**

There was Board consensus for the above trips. Mrs. Barrett was not present.

### **b. Approval of Tax Assessment Appeal**

Mr. Paradise provided a letter from Begley, Carlin and Mandio. Thomas Profy, III, Esquire interceded in the appeal and with the result of an appraisal of the property is recommending a settlement as indicated. Mr. Paradise requested the board to agree to the settlement and approve same for Regional Penns Square Condominium LP.

There was Board consensus for the approval of the settlement. Mrs. Barrett was not present.

### **c. No Bids/Budget Transfers**

## **7. Superintendent's Report**

Mr. Wilson advised that there was a great opening of school. Mr. Wilson did not receive one call regarding transportation. Schools were ready to go and everything went smoothly. All the schools look great. Mr. Wyatt did an outstanding job scheduling the high school. Act 72 has certain requirements that Mr. Paradise and myself are taking care of like letters to taxpayers; IU unit is taking a look at Berkheimer doing County wide. That would be the easiest way for the district to get out the information. Mr. Wilson will keep the board updated.

## **8. Committee Reports**

### **a) Board Policies**

Mr. Bowman advised that there is currently no report.

### **b) Educational Development**

Dr. Spitz advised that a meeting is scheduled for September 20, 2004 at 6:30 p.m.

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

Mr. Webb advised that he is very pleased with Mr. Mowry's report and a meeting is scheduled for September 22, 2004 and October 6, 2004.

d) **IJ Board**

Mrs. Drioli advised that a meeting will take place next week.

e) **Educational Foundation**

Mrs. Cummings advised that the fundraiser will take place on October 15<sup>th</sup> at Twining Hall in Feasterville. Cost is \$25.00 per person with dancing, door prizes and great food.

f) **Technical School**

Dr. Spitz advised that there was no report.

g) **Technology**

Mrs. Jowett advised that there was no report.

**9. Future Topics**

a) **Tax Collector Salaries**

Mr. Paradise noted that by state law the district must set tax collector salaries by February 15, 2005. The district will provide data to board members regarding history of each tax collector. Sometime before February 15<sup>th</sup> the salary should be set for each of the six municipalities within the district.

Mrs. Bostwick inquired whether Berkheimer could do that part of the collection. Mr. Paradise noted that it would have to be coordinated with setting the salary program and if the board chooses to go that route, it is then up to the individual tax collectors option whether to run for election based on the salary information. Mrs. Bostwick feels it would be a more efficient way to handle tax collection if a company such as Berkheimer would collect the taxes.

Mr. Paradise would need to know if there was board interest to pursue this type of collection. The Board wanted Mr. Paradise to gather information regarding same.

Ms. Drioli was concerned that taxpayers would no longer have a tax collector to pay there bills.

**10. Agenda Development for the September 28, 2004 Public Meeting**

Mr. Wilson advised that a public board meeting may not be necessary at the end of the month due to lack of agenda items.

Mr. Bowman made a motion to approve a contract for Dr. Louis Muenker as Assistant Superintendent of Neshaminy School District as discussed in Executive Session this evening.

Mrs. Jowett seconded the motion.

Dr. Spitz noted that the board agreed to changes discussed regarding vacation days.

The Board unanimously approved the motion to approve a contract for Dr. Louis Muenker as Assistant Superintendent. Mrs. Barrett was not present.

**11. Correspondence**

No Correspondence.

**12. Adjournment of Meeting**

Mrs. Jowett moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Bowman seconded the motion. The Board approved the motion with eight ayes. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls  
Board Secretary