

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
May 6, 2014

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on May 6, 2014 in the Harry M. Dangler, Jr., Performing Arts Center at the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Scott E. Congdon, President
Ms. Irene Boyle, Vice President
Mr. John Allen
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Mike Morris
Mr. Stephen Pirritano
Mr. Ron Rudy
Mr. Mark Shubin
Mr. Anthony Sposato

ADMINISTRATORS:

Mr. Robert L. Copeland
Mrs. Barbara Markowitz
Mrs. Theresa Hinterberger
Mr. Anthony Devlin
Dr. Gloria Hancock
Mr. Don Harm

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS: Approximately 75 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Jennifer Burns

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire
Mr. Mike Levin, Esquire

1. Call to Order

Mr. Congdon called the meeting to order at 7:15p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

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

3. Announcements

Prior to the Public Work Session Meeting, the annual Neshaminy Employee Recognition Program was held.

Recognition Awards - The Annual Neshaminy Employee Recognition Program, which was held prior to the Public Board Meeting (Work Session), included the Neshaminy High School Select Choir, under the direction of Mr. Jason Leigh, performing three musical selections. The following long term service awards were presented to certified and support staff members for 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40 and 45 years of service. Also invited were the retirees for the 2013 - 2014 school year.

15 Years of Service - Employees received a ceramic box inscribed with the Neshaminy School District seal.
66 employees have completed 15 years of service.

20 Years of Service - Employees received a gold filled lapel pin inscribed with the Neshaminy seal.
49 employees have completed 20 years of service.

25 Years of Service - Employees received a 6" silver plated bowl engraved with their name.
23 employees have completed 25 years of service.

30 Years of Service - Employees received a brass hand bell engraved with their name.
8 employees have completed 30 years of service.

35 Years of Service - Employee received a 10" silver plated bowl engraved with their.
1 employee has completed 35 years of service.

40 Years of Service - Employee received a crystal apple on a pedestal engraved with their name.
1 employee has completed 40 years of service.

45 Years of Service - Employee received a clock with an engraved plate with their name.

1 employee completed 45 years of service.

Retirees for the 2013 – 2014 school year – Employees received a cloisonné pin with the Neshaminy Seal. We had 34 retirees which included (certified and support staff) members.

Thirty seven of the one-hundred forty nine long-term service award recipients attended the Neshaminy Employee Recognition Program. Twelve of the thirty four retirees attended.

4. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Copeland advised the Board on the following:

- Presentation by the Neshaminy High School Science Club - Delaware Valley Science Fair Information
Teacher: Mrs. Gale Donahue
Students: Eishna Ranganathan, Jaslin Tharakan, Payal Patel, Solomyla Syvyk

5. Public Comment

Angie Manning, New Jersey public school teacher, resident of Middletown Township stated that she received a letter from her daughters' school requesting proof of residency. Ms. Manning said that she had provided proof of residency when she registered her daughters for school and since nothing has changed in the interim she questioned why this request is being made now.

Linda Stoll, Neshaminy High School teacher, resident of Churchville, explained that she teaches business computer and information technology and her students have been well educated on the use of effective communication via social media tools. Ms. Stoll asked the Board to re-evaluate section 5 of Policy 600 and its effect on student-teacher interaction that is vital for 21st century communication.

Janet Dougherty, Neshaminy High School teacher, resident of Feasterville, remarked that teachers communicate every day with students through email, blogs, text and other sites that are appropriate to curriculum objectives without first checking with school principals. Ms. Dougherty said that there should be more faith in the teacher's ability to communicate appropriately with students. She said by requiring teachers to get principals approval it is placing barriers that will prevent effective use of instructor's time and delay communication. She stated that the social media policy is limiting and asked for reconsideration.

Susie Drake, Neshaminy English teacher, resident of Penndel, asked what are the implications of Policy 600. Ms. Drake questioned if she is required to get a onetime approval by a principal or approval each time she communicates with a student through social media. She also asked for clarification regarding the term school publication. Ms. Drake concluded by stating that any remarks on a school blog or at an informal meeting should require the commenter to identify themselves.

Dan Luongo, Neshaminy English teacher, took issue with several points in Policy 600. Mr. Luongo said that the part of the policy that limits the ability to change the publication's name prevents the potential to improve the name in the future. He also said that he is concerned with the wording "it shall not be construed" because this is attempting to control how people can or should think.

Tara Huber, Neshaminy High School teacher and advisor to the Playwickian staff, said that Policy 600 is restrictive and unconstitutional. Ms. Huber remarked that the student staff of the Playwickian includes some of the best student journalists in the country. She stated that this restrictive policy jeopardizes the freedom of the journalists to choose the content of the newspaper, which is a complete violation of the student's First Amendment rights.

Dakota Kilmon, Neshaminy High School student and staff member of the yearbook, said that restricting editors and to assign story ideas is injuring the future development of the student staff members. Ms. Kilmon also recommended that the contract with the publishers be extended to a 2-5 year contract to allow the lowest and most efficient bids.

Meredith Reed, Neshaminy High School student and staff member of the yearbook, voiced concern that limiting the name and content of the yearbook will hinder creative expression of the staff. She said that choosing their own content teaches them the responsibility and priority that will help them develop as young adults who might want to pursue careers in journalism. Ms. Reed said that the yearbook staff loves their school and loves their publications and they do not want to see their creative expressions subdued.

Reed Hennessey, Neshaminy High School student and sports editor of the Playwickian, resident of Langhorne, said the Policy 600 is an angry policy and is a mistake. He stated that the policy is taking away students rights to discuss their thoughts and issues that are important to them.

Jack Haines, Neshaminy High School student and opinion and editorials editor of the Playwickian, resident of Langhorne, read the editorial from October 2013 that declared that the term "Redskins" is racist and vowed not to print it.

Maddy Buffardi, Neshaminy High School student and managing editor of the Playwickian, resident of Feasterville, said she feels Policy 600 is punishing students for standing up for something they believe in. She added that she is dismayed that the Board can assert that the word "Redskins" is not to be construed as a racial slur.

Gillian McGoldrick, Neshaminy High School student and editor-in-chief of the Playwickian, resident of Pennel, said the policy puts restraints on everything a newspaper is. She requested the Board consider sitting down with the newspaper staff to discuss the issues brought up this evening.

Emily Scott, Neshaminy High School student and business and opinion editor of the Playwickian, resident of Langhorne, read from an unsigned editorial that appeared in the November issue regarding the importance of the First Amendment.

Tim Cho, Neshaminy High School student and student life editor and web editor of the Playwickian and layout editor of the Howler magazine, resident of Levittown, stated that communication is most important to any publication. He said that the restrictions of Policy 600 hinder editors and advisors to communicate within the publication timeframe.

6. Items for Approval Tonight

a) Overnight Trips

Mr. Harm submitted the following trips for approval:

1. Neshaminy High School Future Problem Solvers to Iowa State University - June 11 to June 15, 2014.
2. Neshaminy High School Nature Club to the State Envirothon, Susquehanna University and Montour PPL Preserve - May 20 and May 21, 2014

Mr. Pirritano made a motion to accept said trips.

Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said trips by a vote of 9 ayes, and 0 nays.

b) Adoption of the 2014 - 2015 Proposed Final Budget

Mr. Congdon read the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors did, on February 18, 2014, adopt the 2014-2015 Preliminary Budget of the School District in accordance with Act 1 of 2006, and made same available for public inspection as required by law; and

WHEREAS, Section 687 of the Pennsylvania Public School Code requires that the Board of School Directors prepare a Proposed Final Budget at least thirty (30) days prior to the adoption of the Final Budget, and to make the Proposed Final Budget available for public inspection at least twenty (20) days prior to the date set for the adoption of the Final Budget; and

WHEREAS, Section 687 of the Pennsylvania Public School Code requires that the President of the Board of School Directors certify to the Pennsylvania Department of Education that the Proposed Final Budget was prepared, presented and made available for public inspection using the uniform form furnished by the Department of Education; and

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors has the 2014-2015 Proposed Final Budget of the School District in the required form, and desire that same be made available for public inspection as required by law.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2014-2015 Proposed Final Budget presented at this May 6, 2014 Public Meeting of the Board of School Directors is adopted as the 2014-2015 Proposed Final Budget of the School District, and shall be made available for public inspection, and be made available for duplication to any person on request, beginning on May 8, 2014, and that the President of the Board of School Directors is authorized to issue the Certification to the Pennsylvania Department of Education required by Section 687 of the Pennsylvania Public School Code.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors will adopt the 2014-2015 Final Budget of the School District at a Public Meeting to be held on June 17, 2014, at Maple Point Middle School, District Offices/Board Room, 2250 Langhorne-Yardley Road, Langhorne, PA.

Mr. Shubin seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion by a vote of 9 ayes, and 0 nays.

7. Items for Approval at the May 21st Public Board Meeting

a) Revised and New Board Policy #600

- **Revised Board Policy #600 - Publications**
- **New Board Policy #1002 - Volunteers**

Mr. Levin, counsel for the school district with respect to this particular matter, stated that with regard to some valid comments made tonight, Revised Board Policy #600 will include the following changes:

- When referring to the word "Redskins," the term positive will be replaced by the term constitutional sense.
- Mr. Levin noted that two paragraphs were added to the end of the policy stating that students will not be disciplined for editorial decisions; however, if a student author wants to use the word "Redskins," an appeal process to the principal will be provided.

Mr. Pirritano asked Mr. Levin to clarify some of the misconceptions that were brought up during public comment regarding Revised Policy #600.

Mr. Levin stated that the website for the Playwickian is not going to be dismantled, but rather moved to the school website where it can be properly monitored.

b) Appointment of Treasurer

Mrs. Markowitz stated that the Appointment of Treasurer will be an agenda item at the May 21st, Public Board Meeting.

c) Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22 Special Education Contracted Services for 2014 - 2015

Mr. Copeland stated that the Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22 Special Education Contracted Services for 2014 - 2015 will be an agenda item at the May 21st, Public Board Meeting.

d) Bids/Budget Transfers

Mrs. Markowitz stated that there is no Budget Transfer and that there is one bid, 15 - 25 for buy back of 12 school buses and it will be an agenda item at the May 21st, Public Board Meeting.

8. Committee Reports

a) Board Polices

Ms. Boyle stated to the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for May 27th, at 6:30 p.m.

b) Educational Development

Ms. Boyle stated to the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for May 13th, at 6:30 p.m., and there will be quest speakers.

c) Finance/Facilities

Mr. Congdon advised the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for May 7th, at 6:45 p.m.

d) IU Board

Mrs. Cummings advised the Board that there were two presentations, Autism and Bridges Virtual. The next meeting is scheduled for May 20th.

e) Neshaminy Education Foundation

Mr. Shubin advised the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for May 12th, at 4:00 p.m. There will be a rededication to the endowment tile wall on May 7th.

f) Technical School

Mr. Morris stated to the Board that at the last meeting they reviewed the budget process.

g) Technology

Mr. Shubin informed the Board that the next meeting has not yet been scheduled.

h) Facilities Ad Hoc Committee

Mr. Pirritano informed the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for May 7th, after the Finance and Facilities meeting. There will be a presentation from Reynolds Constructions.

i) Legislative

Mr. Copeland stated to the Board that various topics were discussed including new legislation that would apportion special education aides to districts in a special way.

9. Public Comment

Suzie Drake, Neshaminy English teacher, resident of Penndel, asked for an accounting of the fees paid to the legal counsel for advising the Board on policy changes. Ms. Drake also acknowledged the students for inspiring teachers in their chosen profession as educators.

Steve Rodos, retired, resident of Villages of Flowers Mill, asked Mr. Profy for an update on the lawsuit against the Middletown Board of Supervisors. Mr. Rodos questioned why there are various versions of the Policy 600 revisions.

Raina Shumaker, resident of Langhorne, asked if the Home Access application can be implemented to include the elementary school.

Angie Manning, New Jersey public school teacher, resident of Langhorne, mentioned that the electronic communications used by her school district are archived for five years for legal purposes and she suggested that this is something that Neshaminy might want to consider for the future.

Emily Scott, Neshaminy High School student, resident of Langhorne, questioned if the Playwickian website is dismantled and recreated through the district's own website whether this would have an effect on the creative outlets that are presently in place.

10. Future Topics

None.

11. Board Comment

Mr. Shubin thanked the students for their comments stating that their comments were well researched and presented. Mr. Shubin also acknowledged Teacher Appreciation Week. He stated that the "Redskin" term issue will eventually come about and it most likely will not be decided within the Neshaminy community. Mr. Shubin said that he is in favor of the suggestion of the district conducting an open forum debate on the issue.

Mr. Profy made a recommendation to accept the placement of the order with Rohrer for \$150,006 for the three transportation vehicles described in Bid No. 15-25.

Mr. Congdon made a motion to accept Mr. Profy's recommendation for Bid No. 15-25.

Mr. Shubin seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion by a vote of 9 ayes, and 0 nays.

Mr. Allen thanked the students for attending and expressing their opinions.

Mr. Morris said that the district must do what is right and they are open to suggestions and opinions before a decision is made.

Mr. Pirritano thanked the science students and advisor for their presentation. He advised the teachers to forward detailed questions or concerns to the Board for consideration. Mr. Pirritano said he is working on the issue of anonymous comments on blogs. He also said that it should be understood that the decisions of the Board considers the big picture as a district. Mr. Pirritano referred the question of Home Access for elementary schools to Dr. Hancock.

Dr. Hancock stated that the elementary school teachers would like to have their records converted for grading when using Home Access. She explained that the costs associated with this matter will be evaluated and presented to the Board.

Mr. Sposato said that the Board pays attention to all comments and opinions and the students and teachers made a difference tonight. He said that he appreciates the passion that was displayed on the subject matter and the Board will do what it takes to make the right decision for the district and the community.

Ms. Boyle said good points were made tonight and she encouraged the public to come out to the policy committee meetings to express their opinions.

Mrs. Cummings said that the Board is proud of Neshaminy students and she encouraged them to keep coming to meetings and letting their voices be heard.

Mr. Congdon thanked the students for their science presentation and to the public for expressing their concerns and opinions.

12. Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. Congdon moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Sposato seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Congdon adjourned the meeting at 9:11 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Jennifer Burns
Board Secretary