

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
April 12, 2016

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on April 12, 2016, in the Maple Point Middle School Harry M. Dengler, Jr. Performing Arts Center. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Scott E. Congdon, President
Ms. Irene Boyle, Vice President
Mr. Bob Feather
Mrs. Tina Hollenbach
Mr. Mike Morris
Mr. Stephen Pirritano
Mr. Ron Rudy
Mr. Robert Sanna
Mr. Marty Sullivan

ADMINISTRATORS:

Gloria Hancock, Ed.D.
Mrs. Barbara Markowitz
Mr. Anthony Devlin
Mrs. Theresa Hinterberger
Mr. Don Harm
Mr. Paul Meehan

BOARD MEMBER ABSENT:

OTHERS: Approximately 200 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Jennifer Burns

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, Esquire

Call to Order

Mr. Congdon called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Announcements

None

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Hancock advised the Board on the following:

- Summer Fine Arts/Summer Stock Program begins, July 5, 2016
- Neshaminy High School swimmer, David Kneiss now holds eight school records
- Graduation will be held on June 15th, rain date, June 16th
- Last day for students is June 17th

Public Comment

Jim Thompson, resident of Langhorne, voiced his opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman Elementary School citing concerns about the safety of students due to losing the small school atmosphere.

Bob Wharton, resident of Langhorne Borough, voiced his opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman explaining that small schools are better for the educational experience.

Angie Manning, teacher, resident of Middletown, voiced her opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman saying that politics has entered into the struggle.

Chris Pickal, resident of Langhorne, voiced her opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman stating that the advantage of a small school is that the principal and teachers know all the students.

Kevin Gallagher, IT analyst, resident of Langhorne, stated that the district's funds are limited and the savings that will be realized by closing the remaining two schools is truly needed. He asked the Board to follow the Road Map as planned.

Lance Mervine, resident of Langhorne, voiced his opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman saying that this decision will make it harder to block charter schools from coming into the district and some parents may choose to send their children to parochial or charter schools going forward.

Dawn Abbamondi, resident of Langhorne Borough, voiced her opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman stating that this will impact hundreds of students and parents in the district negatively.

Ben Hoffman, attorney, resident of Langhorne, voiced his opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman stating that the Board is not obligated to follow the Road Map and asked them to consider the children.

Doug Hanish, marketing director, resident of Langhorne, voiced his opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman and thanked those citizens who gave their time and effort to keep the school open. He also thanked the Board for their service.

Jack Higgins, resident of Langhorne, voiced his opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman asking the Board to keep their constituents happy by voting no to the closing.

John Allen, former Board member, resident of Levittown, said that if the two school buildings were kept open a great deal of money would have to be invested to renovate them. He said this action would be a losing battle due to the age of the buildings.

Greg Millward, software architect, resident of Langhorne, voiced his opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman stating that smaller schools offer more academic advantages than mega schools.

Lydia Goldberg, resident of Langhorne, voiced her opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman remarking that she values a small school atmosphere where students care about their education and are attended by caring teachers. She said the PTO can help raise money for improvements to the school.

Craig Hitchon, resident of Langhorne, voiced his opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman commenting that those who serve the community as a volunteer, such as Board members, do it because they care deeply, so he asked the Board members to vote for the sake of the students.

LeAnn Hartpence, resident of Langhorne asked the Board to stay the Road Map saying this is what is best for the students and the community.

Amanda Black, PTO Vice President of Oliver Heckman, resident of Langhorne, voiced her opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman. She stated that this year the PTO has raised \$50 thousand and she asked the Board to let them help fund improvements for the school.

Ray Cancila, resident of Langhorne Manor, voiced his opposition to closing Oliver Heckman listing the advantages to the location and close by educational facilities.

Deb Harker, resident of Langhorne, said the question is not the value of Oliver Heckman as a worthy neighborhood school, it is whether the district can afford the cost of renovating and maintaining older buildings as opposed to moving forward with a better plan of offering up to date facilities and excellent educational programs.

Reita Bakshi, resident of Langhorne, remarked that this issue has been discussed and debated for over 10 years. She said the focus should be on the education and welfare of the students. Ms. Bakshi asked the Board to vote yes to close the two schools and move forward with the educational opportunities for Neshaminy School District.

Domenic Esposito, resident of Langhorne, voiced his opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman remarking that it is disappointing to residents to close a great neighborhood school.

Sage Cargas, student of Oliver Heckman, asked the Board to keep her school open. She said she previously went to a private school and didn't have the small community school advantages that Oliver Heckman offers. She said she wants to see Heckman remain open for the sake of her younger brother.

Steve Rodos, retired, resident of Villages of Flowers Mills, outlined the saving that the district would realize from the closing of Lower Southampton and Oliver Heckman schools. He said the savings would go towards increasing educational programs for students. Mr. Rodos said that speaking on behalf of the senior citizens of the community the Road Map should be followed.

Susan Cummings, former Board member, resident of Lower Southampton, said the closing of any school is a very difficult decision, but when it benefits the entire district, it is a necessary decision. She said it is time to move forward and carry out the plan while thinking of the children's future.

Stacey Henry, resident of Langhorne, voiced her opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman. She asked for clarification regarding the savings from closing schools. She said it is confusing how administration costs, staff costs, etc. could be lowered if there have been no staff cuts.

Marianne Stahl, resident of Langhorne Borough, voiced her opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman. She said she hopes that the neighborhood school will be saved and asked the Board to vote no.

Larry Pastor, retired, resident of Middletown, said the passion of the members of the community regarding Oliver Heckman School is noteworthy. He said the Board has listened to the concerns of the public, but now is the time to apply logic to the matter. Mr. Pastor said the question is what is the right thing to do for the entire school district and all the students, not just one single area and school. He said he is confident that the Board will make the responsible decision.

Gene Sonn, editor, resident of Langhorne Borough, voiced his opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman. He stated that the savings would not be that significant in the overall picture and he asked the Board to save Heckman in lieu of gaining a small amount of savings.

Joshua Winthrop, substitute teacher, resident of Holland, voiced his opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman. He said Heckman is a friendly and affable school and they deserve to stay open.

Chloe Billet, fourth grade student at Oliver Heckman, voiced her opposition to the closing of Oliver Heckman. She said the school atmosphere is like a family and she urged the Board to vote no.

Items for Approval Tonight

- a) **Permanent Closure of Lower Southampton Elementary School**
- b) **Permanent Closure of Oliver Heckman Elementary School**

Motion: Permanent Closure of Lower Southampton Elementary School

Mr. Congdon read the following motion:

WHEREAS, in accordance with the Resolution adopted on November 17, 2015, the process for the permanent closure of Lower Southampton Elementary School ("School"), pursuant to the Pennsylvania School Code of 1949, as amended, was initiated; and

WHEREAS, a Public Hearing was held at Maple Point Middle School Auditorium, 2250 Langhorne-Yardley Road, Langhorne, Pennsylvania on January 7, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. upon the question of whether or not to permanently close the Lower Southampton Elementary School located at 7 School Lane, Feasterville, Lower Southampton Township, Bucks County, PA at the end of the 2015-2016 School Year; and

WHEREAS, this action is being taken because of the declining student enrollment throughout the School District over the last twenty (20) years; and

WHEREAS, the Lower Southampton Elementary School is the oldest elementary school in the District and requires extensive renovations and upgrades to bring the School to modern standards of comfort, efficiency and safety; and

WHEREAS, the New Tawanka Elementary School on Brownsville, Road, Feasterville, Lower Southampton Township, Bucks County, PA, which is scheduled to open at the commencement of the 2016-2017 School Year, was planned to and will absorb the student population from Lower Southampton Township; and

WHEREAS, the New Tawanka Elementary School is in close proximity to neighborhoods currently served by Lower Southampton Elementary School, and, thus, there will be a minimization of impact upon student transportation and transportation costs; and

WHEREAS, the School District will realize substantial operating and maintenance cost savings upon the closure of the School; and

WHEREAS, the closure of the School, is a part of the extensive Road Map Plan underway throughout the School District to match building capacities with student population. The Road Map Plan includes the modernization and increased efficiency of the remaining school buildings, the enhancement of the capabilities and operations of the School District; and the increasing of the educational resources of the School District in a cost-effective manner.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors hereby officially declares that Lower Southampton Elementary School will permanently close at the end of the 2015-2016 School Year.

Mr. Pirritano seconded the motion.

Mr. Congdon called for a roll call vote and the tally indicated that the motion passed by a vote of 9 ayes (Ms. Boyle, Mr. Congdon, Mr. Feather, Mrs. Hollenbach, Mr. Morris, Mr. Pirritano, Mr. Rudy, Mr. Sanna, and Mr. Sullivan) and 0 nays.

Motion: Permanent Closure of Oliver Heckman Elementary School

Mr. Congdon read the following motion:

WHEREAS, in accordance with the Resolution adopted on November 17, 2015, the process for the permanent closure of Oliver Heckman Elementary School ("School"), pursuant to the Pennsylvania School Code of 1949, as amended, was initiated; and

WHEREAS, a Public Hearing was held at Maple Point Middle School Auditorium, 2250 Langhorne-Yardley Road, Langhorne, Pennsylvania on January 6, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. upon the question of whether or not to permanently close the Oliver Heckman Elementary School located at Maple Avenue and Cherry Street, Middletown Township, Bucks County, PA at the end of the 2015-2016 School Year; and

WHEREAS, this action is being taken because of the declining student enrollment throughout the School District over the last twenty (20) years; and

WHEREAS, the Oliver Heckman Elementary School which was constructed in 1966 has not had major renovations or expansion since construction requires extensive and costly renovations, including energy saving, HVAC-mechanical, security upgrades and potential ADA Compliance upgrades, such as installation of an elevator, to bring the School to modern standards of comfort, efficiency and safety; and

WHEREAS, the School has a PDE Regular Capacity of 546 students and Maximum Practical Capacity of 591 students but, has a current student enrollment of only 381, which makes the School the smallest school in the School District; and

WHEREAS, the New Tawanka Elementary School on Brownsville, Road, Feasterville, Lower Southampton Township, Bucks County, PA, which is scheduled to open at the commencement of the 2016-2017 School Year, was planned to and will absorb most of the student population of the School; and

WHEREAS, the New Tawanka Elementary School is in close proximity to neighborhoods currently served by Oliver Heckman Elementary School, and, thus, there will be a minimization of impact upon student transportation and transportation costs; and

WHEREAS, the School District will realize substantial operating and maintenance cost savings upon the closure of the School; and

WHEREAS, the closure of the School, is a part of the extensive Road Map Plan underway throughout the School District to match building capacities with student population. The Road Map Plan includes the modernization and increased efficiency of the remaining school buildings, the enhancement of the capabilities and operations of the School District and the increasing of the educational resources of the School District in a cost-effective manner.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors hereby officially declares that the Oliver Heckman Elementary School will permanently close at the end of the 2015-2016 School Year.

Mr. Pirritano seconded the motion.

Mr. Morris made a motion to have the roll call called in reverse the order the roll call names are called.

Mr. Rudy seconded the motion.

Mr. Congdon called for a roll call vote and the tally indicated that the motion failed by a vote of 2 ayes, (Mr. Morris, and Mr. Rudy) and 7 nays, (Ms. Boyle, Mr. Congdon, Mr. Feather, Mrs. Hollenbach, Mr. Pirritano, Mr. Sanna, and Mr. Sullivan.)

Mr. Congdon called for a roll call vote on the closing of Oliver Heckman Elementary School and the tally indicated that the motion passed by a vote of 5 ayes (Ms. Boyle, Mr. Congdon, Mrs. Hollenbach, Mr. Pirritano, and Mr. Sullivan) and 4 nays, (Mr. Feather, Mr. Morris, Mr. Rudy, and Mr. Sanna.)

Other Board Business

Mr. Profy stated that the BCIU requested to have air conditioning improvements at the Samuel Everitt location at BCIU's exclusive expense, which is approximately, \$500,000. This would result in air conditioning in 24 classrooms and the computer room. This is independent of any extension or modification to the lease. They would need this approval so they can proceed with their bid solicitation and other aspects of the construction development process.

Mr. Congdon made a motion to approve the BCIU's request to have air conditioning installed at the Samuel Everitt location with no cost to the school district.

Mrs. Hollenbach seconded the motion.

Mr. Congdon called for a roll call vote and the tally indicated that the motion passed by a vote of 5, ayes, (Ms. Boyle, Mr. Congdon, Mrs. Hollenbach, Mr. Pirritano, and Mr. Sullivan) and 4 nays, (Mr. Feather, Mr. Morris, Mr. Rudy, and Mr. Sanna.)

Public Comment

Deb Harker, banker, resident of Langhorne, remarked that the last election represented the voters of more areas than just those of the Oliver Heckman community. She said the Board member in that area does not owe his election to any one group of people and she is glad to see that he is a trustworthy person who will do the responsible thing for the entire district.

John Allen, former Board member, commended the members of the Heckman community for their resolve and said that everyone must now come together to work for a better Neshaminy.

Steve Rodos, retired, resident of Villages of Flowers Mills, expressed his sorrow for the disappointment of the Heckman community. He urged the public to attend the committee meetings, where the concerns and

opinions are heard more personally.

Board Comment

Mrs. Hollenbach said she understands the emotional feelings of the Heckman community, but she believes the best decision has been made. She said the Board members have kept the best interest of all the students in mind while making this decision. Mrs. Hollenbach said it is time to move forward and unite the district while adding more programs to the curriculum.

Mr. Rudy expressed his disappointment with the outcome of the vote. He said 25% of the district will not have an elementary school and overwhelming public wishes were ignored. Mr. Rudy said he does agree that Neshaminy does have to move forward.

Mr. Morris acknowledged that the Heckman community will be very discouraged by the outcome of this decision and he reminded them to remember this the next time they go to the polls.

Mr. Pirritano thanked the Heckman parents and taxpayers for expressing their opinions. He said closing neighborhood schools is an unpopular decision and he would not be in favor of it if there were other viable options; however, it is the best choice for the future of Neshaminy.

Mr. Sanna said now that the decision has been made it is time to move forward for the betterment of Neshaminy.

Mr. Feather said he looks forward to a united Board and to mapping out a plan for Neshaminy.

Ms. Boyle agreed that the decision was difficult and she acknowledged that the Board's responsibility is towards the entire school district.

Mr. Sullivan said if he had wanted to take the easy way out he would have voted differently; however, he had to do the fiscally responsible thing for the benefit of the whole district.

Mr. Congdon said that the impulse to vote with your heart is strong, but a Board member must be rational and conscientious; therefore, the majority voted to close Heckman. He said the decision was non-political despite comments to the contrary. Mr. Congdon urged the parents and students of Heckman to bring their energy to their new schools and work towards unifying the student bodies.

Adjournment

Mr. Congdon moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Feather seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Condon adjourned the meeting at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Burns
Board Secretary

**NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING
OF BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
OF NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to the provisions of Pennsylvania Public School Code of 1949, as amended, and the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act of 1986, July 3, P.L. 388, No. 84, as amended, that the Board of School Directors of Neshaminy School District will hold a Special Meeting on Tuesday, April 12, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of Maple Point Middle School, 2250 Langhorne-Yardley Road, Langhorne, PA 19047.

The purposes of the Special Meeting is to consider and to act upon whether or not to permanently close the Lower Southampton Elementary School located at 7 School Lane, Lower Southampton Township, Bucks County, PA at the end of the 2015-2016 School Year; to consider and act upon whether or not to permanently close the Oliver Heckman Elementary School located at Maple Avenue and Cherry Street, Middletown Township, Bucks County, PA at the end of the 2015-2016 School Year; and the taking of such other actions as lawfully come before this Special Meeting.

Members of the public are invited to attend and participate in this Special Meeting as permitted by Law.

Dated: March 29, 2016

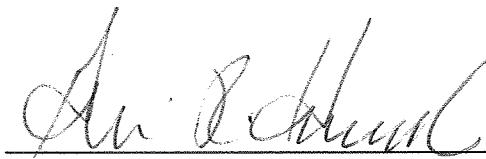
Jennifer Burns, Secretary
Board of School Directors of
Neshaminy School District

AFFIDAVIT OF POSTING

IN RE: April 12, 2016, 7:00 p.m. Special Meeting of the Board of School Directors of the Neshaminy School District

Gloria R. Hancock, Ed.D, having been duly sworn does depose and say:

that she is the Acting Superintendent of the Neshaminy School District, and that she did, on March 29, 2016, cause Notice of the Special Meeting of the Board of School Directors of the Neshaminy School District, to consider and act upon the proposed permanent closures of the Lower Southampton Elementary School and Oliver Heckman Elementary School, a copy of which is annexed as Exhibit "A," to be posted at a conspicuous location at the main entrance of the School Administration portion of Maple Point Middle School, 2250 Langhorne-Yardley Road, Langhorne, Pennsylvania, and that said Public Notice has been continuously posted at said location from the date of posting through the date of this Affidavit.



Gloria R. Hancock, Ed.D.,
Acting Superintendent
Neshaminy School District

Sworn to and subscribed before me on
this 13th day of April, 2016.



NOTARY PUBLIC

