

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC WORK SESSION MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
April 5, 2016

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session on April 5, 2016 in the District Offices Board Room 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. Bob Feather  
Ms. 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. Don Harm  
Mr. Anthony Devlin  
Mrs. Theresa Hinterberger  
Mr. Paul Meehan

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHERS:** Approximately 100 persons from the public, staff and press

**SECRETARY:** Mrs. Jennifer Burns

**SOLICITOR:** John Torrente, Esquire

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1. **Call to Order**

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

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

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

3. **Announcements**

None

4. **Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Hancock advised the Board on the Following:

- Mr. Tom Magdelinkas presented an award to the Neshaminy High School Varsity Competitive Cheerleaders and Coach Michelle Mazur for their undefeated season for 2015 - 2016.
- Mr. Ryan Brennan from Reynolds Construction gave an update on the Tawanka Construction Project.
- Congratulations went to NHS Alum Ryan Arcidiacono and the Villanova Wildcats.
- Maple Point held a Rally for Villanova's Ryan Arcidiacono.
- Sandburg celebrated re-opening of their swimming pool.
- STEAM Expo 2016 will be held Thursday, April 7<sup>th</sup>.

5. **Public Comment**

Karen Campbell, Neshaminy bus driver, advised the Board that the STA bus drivers that are used as an outsourced auxiliary bus company do not follow the rules of Neshaminy. Ms. Campbell said cell phones are being used and the outsourced bus drivers do not know the routes and their runs are often late.

Larry Pastor, retired, resident of Laurel Oaks, expressed his support for the Neshaminy Road Map and moving ahead with the closing of Oliver Heckman School. He stated that this plan has been researched, discussed and considered over and over for years and now that the decision has been made it is time to move on.

Doug Hanisch, marketing director, resident of Langhorne Borough, commented that keeping Oliver Heckman open would cost less than 1% of Neshaminy's operating budget. He said that small percentage comparative to all the benefits that a small community school provides it would be unconscionable to close

Heckman. Mr. Hanisch said that if Heckman is kept open, it would not be necessary to spend any money on renovations.

Jaclyn Strapple, resident of Langhorne, stated that a large majority of the taxpayers do not support Neshaminy's Road Map. She outlined the benefits of small neighborhood schools, while voicing concerns about the balance in staff to student ratio should Heckman be closed.

Angela Clark, accounting clerk, resident of Langhorne Manor, implored the Board to vote "no" on the question of closing Oliver Heckman School. Ms. Clark asked the Board to take into consideration the human element for keeping the school open and not just consider the dollar sign.

Steve Rodos, retired, resident of Villages of Flowers Mill, said he is concerned that the Board is not acting on problems with the Food Services Program. He said that the Food Services salaries and benefits exceed the sales revenue and he would like to know how the Board will address this matter. Mr. Rodos asked the Board if some of the savings realized from the consolidation plan will be used towards foreign language programs at the elementary level. Mr. Rodos concluded by mentioning the report given by the IU on the success of the five to eight program in the middle school.

Steve Goldfarb, resident of Langhorne Manor, commented that he feels that the Board has disregarded the wishes of the residents and taxpayers regarding the closing of neighborhood schools. He presented his views regarding the hardships that would be imposed on Heckman families should the young children be subjected to long bus trips to and from school, etc.

Eugene Sonn, editor, resident of Langhorne Borough, remarked that the combined savings by closing Everitt and Lower Southampton schools is the target savings for the Road Map Plan, so perhaps Heckman can be allowed to remain open. Mr. Sonn said he is confident that the Board isn't only thinking of money and will consider more than just the savings aspect in making the decision. He thanked the Board for their service to the Neshaminy School District.

**6. Items for Approval Tonight**

**a) Approval of Overnight Trip**

**Motion: Approval of Overnight Trip**

Mr. Congdon read the following motion:

According to Board Policy #618, trips extending overnight are permitted by authorization of the Board of School Directors only.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approves the following overnight trip:

- Neshaminy High School AE Future Problem Solving Pennsylvania Championship, Camp Hill, PA - April 8 - April 9, 2016.

Mr. Feather seconded the motion.

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

**7. Items for Approval at the April 19th Public Board Meeting**

- Lease for Neshaminy Kids Club**
- Proposal to Amend Existing Lease Agreement with BCIU #22/Everitt Building**
- Revised 2015 - 2016 School Calendar**
- 2016 - 2019 Special Education Plan**
- Bids**

Mr. Congdon stated that items a, b, c, d, and e will be agenda items at the April 19th, Public Board Meeting.

**8. Committee Reports**

**a) Board Policies**

Ms. Boyle advised the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for April 28th, at 6:30 p.m.

**b) Educational Development**

Ms. Boyle informed the Board that at the last meeting the IU gave a report on the 5-8 program.

**c) Finance/Facilities**

Mr. Congdon advised the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for April 18th, at 6:30 p.m., and topics will include the restructuring of a bond.

**d) IU Board**

Ms. Boyle informed the Board that the next meeting is scheduled for April 19th, at 7:00 p.m.

**e) Education Foundation**

Mr. Rudy informed the Board of the total amounts of the Bertucci's and Flyers Night fundraisers. He also stated that a winner will be picked for the Spring Raffle at the next Board Meeting.

**f) Technical School**

Mr. Morris advised the Board that at the last meeting they discussed various venues for the Graduation Class of 2016.

**g) Technology**

Mr. Feather advised the Board that the date of the next meeting has not yet been set.

**h) Facilities Ad Hoc Committee**

Mr. Pirritano announced to the Board that the next meeting has not yet been set.

**i) Legislative**

Ms. Boyle stated to the Board that a letter has been sent to two legislators in the district and as soon as they respond a date will be set for the meeting.

**9. Public Comment**

Amanda Black, resident of Langhorne, said the PTO will be happy to defray some of the costs to bring Heckman up to better standards. She said that most of the parents feel that just because the road map says Heckman should be closed; it doesn't mean it has to be followed. Ms. Black asked the Board to consider all factors and do the right thing.

Josh Goldberg, resident of Langhorne, disputed the figures in the report outlining the costs to the district should Heckman remain open. He asked the Board to further review the numbers.

Leann Hartpence, resident of Langhorne, disagrees that no repairs are needed if Heckman remains open. She cautioned those parents who are in favor of keeping the school open with no improvements that they are sentencing the children and future children of Heckman to attend a sub-standard building with no air conditioning and poor air quality, etc. She voiced her support for the closing of Heckman.

Rita Bakshi, resident of Langhorne, stated that it is disheartening that the closing of Heckman is still being discussed when the plan has already been well underway. She urged Board members to remember the statements made during campaigning, which was to focus on the best interest of all Neshaminy students and not just a small group from individual areas.

Larry Pastor, retired, resident of Langhorne, declared that if the road map is not followed Neshaminy will face a brand new crisis and the students will be the ones suffering just to keep a building open. He urged the Board to do the right thing and think about the students and taxpayers.

Angie Manning, teacher, resident of Langhorne, recalled that she had previously presented the Board with

1,300 signatures opposing the consolidation plan. She prompted the Board to keep in mind what the taxpayers want.

Doug Hanisch, resident of Langhorne Borough, challenged the Board to refute the numbers that he has provided to the Board and public. Mr. Hanisch said the district has already saved enough money, so why not leave Heckman open. He said that there are no studies indicating that renovating schools improves the academic performance of students; however, it is proven that students do better in smaller school environments.

Steve Rodos, retired, resident of Villages of Flowers Mills, commented that Heckman is an old school and the condition of the air quality is basically unknown. He stated that a comfortable and safe environment does have an impact on the concentration and performance of students, so the school should be closed and the students allowed to enjoy a brand new school.

Steve Goldfarb, resident of Langhorne, said that the neighborhood school is very important to parents and taxpayers. He urged the Board to consider the wishes of the voters who supported them.

**10. Future Topics**

None

**11. Board Comment**

Mr. Rudy said according to Reynolds Construction Oliver Heckman could be renovated for \$7.2 million. He mentioned that a member of the public who is now in favor of closing the 3 elementary schools, was of a different opinion 8 years ago.

Mr. Morris said there were many taxpayers that were against closing elementary schools and the election demonstrated that. He voiced concern over the allegation that STA bus drivers may not be following the regulations. Mr. Morris advised the public before they pay any deposits toward overnight trips they should be sure the trip has been approved by the Board. Mr. Morris suggested that instead of closing another elementary school he would be in favor of closing a middle school.

Ms. Hollenbach assured the public that she is listening to the comments from the public and she believes the issues are not about region against region, it is all about Neshaminy as a whole.

Mr. Pirritano reiterated that the Board does take the comments from the public seriously. He thanked the Neshaminy Cheerleaders for a great job in winning the championship. He invited the public to attend the STEAM Expo. Mr. Pirritano said there are many different interpretations of the numbers associated with the road map. He again reviewed the PSERS increases and the crisis that Neshaminy faces. Mr. Pirritano said the Board is doing the best for the district as a whole to survive.

Ms. Boyle said she takes fiscal responsibility very seriously. She also stated that she is concerned about the health and safety of the Heckman students being in an outdated building. Ms. Boyle said the Board owes it to the students to provide a safe environment for all students.

Mr. Feather congratulated the Neshaminy Cheerleaders and Villanova for their victories. He promised that whatever the outcome he will support the decision of the Board. He raised his questions and concerns about the road map and said he is against closing Oliver Heckman. Mr. Feather said he will do what he believes is best for the entire Neshaminy School District.

Mr. Pirritano remarked that none of the administrators advised that it would be a sound decision to close a middle school and that is why it was not considered.

Mr. Rudy disagreed with the suggestion that Neshaminy does not have neighborhood schools representing designated areas. He said to close Heckman and take away that school from that area would be blatantly unfair.

Mrs. Markowitz addressed Mr. Rodos' question regarding the Food Service Program stating that there are other revenues that must be taken into account in the overall picture.

Dr. Hancock said the smaller school environment can be achieved in the larger schools by personalizing the buildings. She also said the quality of the teachers must be considered for an excellent learning environment. Dr. Hancock said the comfort and quality of the environment in a school building makes for a better learning atmosphere for the students. She remarked that the health and welfare of the students must be considered and with older buildings this is a serious concern.

Mr. Minotti said all buses have surveillance cameras and the management has the ability to monitor drivers regularly. He said Neshaminy does not discipline STA drivers because they are not the employer; however, if an STA driver is found to have violated a regulation they will be banned from driving for Neshaminy going forward. He said there are times when mechanics or dispatchers will be called on to take a bus route due to absenteeism, which is customary among all school districts. Mr. Minotti said that the length of time of a bus run can vary depending on traffic, road conditions, etc.

Mr. Congdon remarked that the new school on the Tawanka site is being designed to have a small school feeling. He said the fifth through eighth grade model has been an overwhelming success. Mr. Congdon said he is totally against the suggestion of closing a middle school instead of the three elementary schools and is astonished by the idea. Mr. Congdon concluded by congratulating the Neshaminy Cheerleaders for winning the championship and expressed the pride that Neshaminy feels for their accomplishment.

#### **12 Adjournment of Meeting**

Mr. Congdon moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Sullivan 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