

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
September 22, 2009

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on September 22, 2009, in the Harry M. Dengler, Jr. Performing Arts Center in the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

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

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

Dr. Louis T. Muenker  
Mrs. Patricia Boylan  
Dr. Geeta Heble  
Mr. Kevin Kane  
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan

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

**OTHERS:** Approximately 130 persons from the public, staff and press

**SOLICITOR:**

Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

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Mr. Webb announced that prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held for Board members regarding personnel matters and legal issues at 6:30 p.m.

**Call to Order**

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**Announcements**

None.

**Public Comment**

Mrs. Annamarie Miller, Langhorne, PA, stated that she is a resident for fourteen years in Middletown Township and came to the meeting with a parent's prospective about everything happening in the school district. On Constitution Day the parents were greeted on Back to School Night by teachers exercising their right to assembly. As a parent we get the message. Costs of repairs to high school right before the collapse of the economy have put the district in a very bad state. Mrs. Miller does expect it to get better. The Board is tightening the belt, doing better where they can. Mrs. Miller feels we need to hold our community together tightly, if only to honor the folks who are in a war zone, so that they can come home to a peaceful community. We are all neighbors to each other. The Board has raised children, teachers have raised children in our district learning. Other school districts have worked things out peacefully. That is what Mrs. Miller is hoping for. Be a united we stand type Americans.

Mrs. Margaret Kraus, Levittown, PA, stated that she is a house mother and is present to speak about the school staff who are good and she cannot see why the district would want to replace them. The students know them real well and the staff knows the students. New people will not know our children. Mrs. Kraus is

concerned about not having buses to pick up elementary school children. Parents need to drop them off at the playground since the road is too dangerous to walk on. Mrs. Kraus is speaking for many of the mothers.

Mrs. Sue Raffin, Levittown, PA, stated that she is a resident for eleven years with two children in the district. Mrs. Raffin is president of the Miller PTO and as president she speaks to many parents throughout the week. Concerns are arising to the point where parents are considering leaving Neshaminy and moving to a better district. It is not because of the teachers or present quality of education, our teachers are exceptional. It is the way things are handled and the direction the district has taken. Decisions are made without much consideration for the students and by the time the parents hear, it is too late to do anything about it. One such decision was the reassignment of the specialist teachers at Miller. Cuts had to be made for budget reasons, we accepted the fact that we would only have the specialist four days in the building, however, in August we learned that we lost more than one day a week, we lost the gym teacher and we have no main teacher, but all but one of our specials. It was done last minute and there was nothing we could do about it. It was an underhanded move because it was done after our Principal retired and before our new Principal had a chance to get settled into the building. Mrs. Raffin personally e-mailed three Board members and two district Administrators and out of five e-mails Mrs. Raffin got one answer. Her concerns were not considered and the changes were not done fairly. Miller was short changed. The outsourcing of the support staff is also being considered. These people are like family and live in the Neshaminy community. Their children have gone to school in Neshaminy or are presently attending school. They care about our children. They know and care about our students. The Board is thinking about bringing in outside companies whose employees do not live within our community and they do not know our children. We as parents want to be heard. We want our concerns validated. We want to be aware of the changes going on before they are put into action. We want to know that our district Administrators and Board members are making decisions that are well thought out with every aspect taken into consideration. Please make the right, educated decision, for our children.

Mr. Larry Pastor, Langhorne, PA, stated that he is a business executive and a piece of literature handed out last week throughout the district prompted him to speak this evening. Mr. Pastor acknowledged the union and teacher who handed same out and say it would have been more appropriate if the NFT was at the door of the Middletown Township Tax Collectors office August 31<sup>st</sup> when most people paid their taxes the last possible day because of the size of same and they could hand it out there and explained to each taxpayer as they walked in why the Board's offer of 3% guaranteed annual raise, job for life, full retirement, and relatively nominal contribution to health care unfair. That would have been more plausible. Seventy percent of the people who pay taxes do not have children in school and 95% of the residents do not support the current position the teacher's union has taken in the negotiations. The Board and taxpayers are not being unfair. We all understand that we need to pay taxes. We just don't want to be taken extreme advantage of. We have to pay for services and labor costs in the contract. Over the next three years double digit tax increases imposed on top of any school tax increase or 10% for multiple years to address the pension refunding of public workers, including the teachers. The state tax increase will be dramatic and it needs to be taken into consideration. Teachers should be shown respect, but they are not a protected class, and therefore, we need to address this as business and a community that cannot afford any longer to pay what this union has gotten over the past contract and what they are currently asking for. Mr. Pastor thanked Ms. Boyd and the NFT for single handedly galvanized fervent opposition to their position in the negotiation. Support has been increased for the Board's position. Shirts and stickers signify solidarity for the people that wear them. Mr. Pastor would not take that away. Is wearing them in the classroom or at Back to School Night appropriate? Mr. Pastor understands first amendment rights, but are the students permitted to wear shirts signifying their solidarity in representing their parents for the tax increases and costs. Mr. Pastor does not think it would be permitted and it would be disruptive. This is all due to a current contract that a board ratified years ago and the competence should be questioned. The NFT should remember that they are asking the community to support extraordinary demands after that Board made a big mistake. It is painful to go back, but it was never an entitlement. Teachers are caring, compassionate people and that is why they chose the profession, but the current behavior makes you wonder. This issue has become very personal in this community. There is no more anonymous union, this is all of the teachers. The shirts and stickers signify many things to the community. What does it signify to the kid sitting at the desk whose father lost his job, it's your problem and I have a contract and job for life in Neshaminy, I have a good thing going and I don't care what you're going through. What does it signify to the

high schooler who had to move because his house was foreclosed in the district. That won't happen to me because I have step increases, extra pay perks, COLA, etc. What does it signify to the grade schooler who is told she can't get a new bike because mom and dad had 20% pay cuts across the board? Your parents may not be getting raises, but I deserve my 6% raise for the next four years. What does it signify to a student whose parents lost money in their retirements and 401K because they don't have defined benefits. I don't care about you, or that you have to pay more taxes to fund my losses in my pension and our benefits in the package. You just have to work longer. What does it signify to a student watching his parent's pinch pennies to pay Neshaminy taxes. We don't really care, tax increases are your problem, and most of us don't even live here. What does it signify to retired people and seniors, elderly in our community. We don't care if you cannot afford Neshaminy taxes, we need our raises, our free health care, our \$30,000 retirement bonus, so we can live anywhere when we retire with full health care and a significant pension paid by all of you. Just move. Shirts and stickers signify your solidarity. When you wear them in the classrooms of the community understand that it signifies more than your solidarity to student's, neighbors and communities. It is hard to believe that most of the teacher's are behind such a flawed strategy. Most would be embarrassed by same. The Board is being more than fair. I would ignore this. The right deal is on the table and it is fair. There should be no compromise. Teacher's need to take the deal before the Board is forced to outsource the support staff, terminate more people, layoff more people and terminate programs. This would be the only solution for a budget under this much pressure.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that he is a substitute teacher at the High school and currently he is trying to see from the Department of Labor whether the substitute pay is above or below the poverty limit. Mr. Rodos praised Mr. Minotti and those employees who work in his department. The learning center located on the grounds of the high school looks fantastic. Their work created a night and day difference in the premises. Rethink again about outsourcing their services. Since 9<sup>th</sup> grade is at the high school requirements for graduation should be reconsidered. Foreign language should be a requirement and other disciplines not at four years should be increased to four years. Language should start in the elementary schools. Mr. Rodos urged not to impose those cuts suggested at the end of last year. These cuts are directly related to the quality of education in the Neshaminy School District. Closely investigate the millions of dollars spent on outside professional services before making cuts directly affecting education. Mr. Rodos took exception to the prior speaker's interpretation of the handout, did not go to the crux of the contract, but only to the interpretation of negotiation. Mr. Rodos feels that students at the high school would need stickers attached to skin. Shirts would be an improvement. Mr. Rodos would try for a dress code for all students. This is not the proper venue to argue the nuts and bolts of any contract. Mr. Rodos urged both sides to keep on mixing and come to an agreement.

Mrs. Mindy Anderson, Twin Oaks, Levittown, PA, President of the Neshaminy Educational Support Professional Association, taxpayer, voter and resident of Neshaminy School District. Mrs. Anderson has been employed with the school district for approximately twenty years as a secretary. Mrs. Anderson stated that on the Neshaminy website named info block spot. Com it stated for a recap of the September 8<sup>th</sup> meeting that "during public comment the head of the Neshaminy Support Staff union presented the board with another petition demanding that the support worker's jobs should not be outsourced." What we are demanding is to bargain in good faith. The taxpayers, residents, and voter's signatures represent: "We the taxpayer's of the Neshaminy School District petition the Neshaminy School Board of School Directors to stop all actions of threatening the school support staff with subcontracting of their jobs. We do not support hiring for profit companies and/or eliminating or reducing the livelihoods of the Neshaminy Support employees. Not only are you threatening our livelihoods, but the food on the table of the children of the employees with a high percentage of those being Neshaminy students, the payment of the mortgage and school taxes to Neshaminy on our homes. Some of these employees are your neighbors. These additional signatures being given to the Board tonight will total approximately 600 with more to come. Mrs. Anderson thanked the teachers for all their work and caring for the children and working together with us as a family."

#### Student Representative

Mr. Brian Titus, Vice President of the Student Council at Neshaminy High School, provided the following report:

- Class of 2010 will be the first to graduate from the new high school

- High School now contains all four grade levels
- First few days were just as expected, crowded and chaotic
- High School began to run smoothly and less crowded – Administration helped
- New improvements – Science labs, information booths, air conditioning
- Fall sports are off to a great start – Football off to three and 0 start with game against Abington

Mr. Titus stated that he will be proud in June to say he graduated from Neshaminy High School.

#### Superintendent's Report

Dr. Muenker stated that Brian represents the value of everything that is done for students from the school board, teachers, administrators, and support staff. Brian is a reflection of what we want to see in our young people leaving our institution. Many others mirror his talents.

Dr. Muenker stated the editors and staff writers of the 2008-2009 Playwickian received the Colombia Scholastic Press Association Gold medal certificate of excellence for high school journalism. The Association has critiqued the Playwickian for thirty years and 23 years the district has received a gold medal.

Dr. Muenker announced that Kathleen Kenny has received Teacher of the Year Award for Health, Physical Education and Dance on the Middle School level.

Dr. Muenker read the following proclamation:

"Whereas, Neshaminy High School is recognized by PIAA for exemplifying high ideals of good sportsmanship, conducting itself in an ethical manner, and setting an example for others to follow during the 2008 fall sports season, the 2008-2009 winter sports season and the 2009 spring sports season, and

Whereas, Neshaminy High School Administration, coaches, student athletes, cheerleaders and other support groups and adult and student followers epitomize good sportsmanship and Neshaminy High School acknowledges its role in restoring sportsmanship to its educational prospective and is aware of its influence on the behavior of others to act in a similar responsible manner, and

Now, Therefore, Be it resolved, that the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association and District 1 committee applaud Neshaminy High School as a Sportsmanship, the only missing piece is you recipient."

Dr. Muenker noted that Neshaminy was the only school district in the Suburban One league to receive this award.

#### Approval of Treasurer's Report, Check Register, and Exonerations of Personal and Per Capita Tax

Dr. Muenker presented the following for approval:

- August, 2009 Treasurer's Report, subject to audit
- Check Register – August 2009
- Personal and per capita tax exonerations for July and August 2009

Dr. Muenker went through the reports in the absence of Mr. Paradise. Dr. Muenker advised that Mr. Paradise has returned to work as of yesterday and the district welcomes him back.

Mr. Koziol moved that the August, 2009 Treasurer's Report, subject to audit, check register for August, 2009 and personal and per capita tax exonerations for July and August, 2009 be approved and Mr. Eccles seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said reports.

#### Certified and Support Personnel Actions

Dr. Muenker presented the following for approval:

- Elections – Certified Personnel
- Resignations and Leaves of Absence – Certified Personnel
- Elections – Support Personnel
- Resignations and Leaves of Support Personnel

Mr. Blasch moved the certified and support personnel actions be approved. Ms. Boyle seconded same.

The Board unanimously approved said personnel actions.

#### Motion: Participation in Chester County I.U. Joint Purchasing Program

Dr. Spitz presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the District participates in cooperative purchasing agreements with entities under the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1996; and

WHEREAS, these agreements have financially assisted the District by increasing its purchasing power through joint purchasing with other municipalities and other governmental units; and

WHEREAS, the parties seek to join with other political subdivisions and other eligible agencies and organizations in order to take advantage of lower prices, reduces advertising costs and other economics associated with combining the purchases of materials, supplies, and equipment, through the joint competitive bidding process, whenever it appears such combining of purchases may be to the advantage of all the participating entities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Business Administrator be authorized to participate in purchase contracts with Chester County Intermediate Unit when it is financially advantageous to the District to order and purchase such materials, supplies and equipment when needed by the District.

Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion.

#### Federal Programs

Dr. Muenker stated that the Board will be updated each month on the federal grants and monies received.

#### Other Board Business

Mr. O'Connor requested that at some point Dr. McGee provide a building utilization of the high school. Mr. O'Connor also inquired regarding the building black out at the high school, leaking which is occurring in the high school and a crack in the floor near main street. Mr. Minotti advised that the electrical outage was due to PECO and not a district problem. Emergency generator did not come on since it was in the off position. Leak in roof in cafeteria will be taken care of by contractors and could be due to HVAC piping. Crack in floor in main street will be looked at by contractors under warranty. Mr. O'Connor is concerned about the PA system in the black box theater and announcements are difficult to hear. It is presently being recabled and a new amplifier is coming to the site on Thursday for installation.

Mr. O'Connor inquired regarding student badges and implementation of same. Dr. Muenker stated that it is planned for later in the school year for security reasons. Dr. Spitz wanted to know why the Board was not advised of the badges. Dr. Muenker advised it was an oversight.

Mr. Koutsouradis advised that complaints are arising due to safety issues and distance with bus routes. Dr. Muenker advised that a number of concerns have been received and the transportation department is making every effort to address all concerns. Greater distances are required to walk and all requests are being

addressed on an individual basis. Mr. Lambert is looking at each case individually. Some of the requests to date are valid and adjustments have been made. Not all cases have been satisfied. Budget obligations must be met.

Mr. O'Connor thanked Mr. Lambert for his work and efforts with each situation.

Mr. Koziol questioned the hours spent by the inspectors at the high school from Middletown Township regarding fees of \$125 per hour billing rate. Mr. Koziol inquired whether someone has been auditing the number and will the district be receiving monies back? Mr. O'Connor stated that upon completion of the project monies, if due, would be refunded. Dr. Muenker stated that the funds are being tracked.

#### Public Comment

Mr. Sy Goldstein, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that Flowers Mill contributes approximately \$4M per year towards taxes which did not occur ten years ago since the development was not there. These funds are evaporated in salaries. Mr. Goldstein stated that Public Employees Retirement System figures in the next three years could hit 30%. Mr. Goldstein does not feel they are suffering. Teachers are not saying that maybe those employees laid off could support their families if we don't get the increases we are demanding. Maybe the students will have better curriculum. No, they say give it to us and we don't care where you get from, as long as you don't get it from us. That is not fair.

#### Board Comment

Mr. Blasch congratulated Mr. Minotti and his department on a find job at the Neshaminy Learning Center.

#### Adjournment

Mr. Koziol moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Eccles seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Anita E. Walls  
Board Secretary