

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
BOARD STRATEGIC ACTION COMMITTEE
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
November 17, 2008

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on November 17, 2008 in the auditorium at Lower Southampton Elementary School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

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

ADMINISTRATORS:

Dr. Louis T Muenker
Dr. Sandra Costanzo
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan
Dr. Geeta A. Heble

SOLICITOR:

SECRETARY:

Mrs. Anita E. Walls

OTHERS: Approximately persons from the public, staff and press

BOARD STRATEGIC ACTION COMMITTEE MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Eccles called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Eccles requested everyone in attendance to join in the pledge of allegiance.

3. WELCOME AND MEETING OVERVIEW

Dr. Muenker thanked Mr. Walsh for hosting the event at Lower Southampton this evening. Special thanks to the PTO of Lower Southampton for refreshments and snacks. Dr. Muenker stated that the last Strategic Meeting took place on November 5th and there was not opportunity and time to discuss the topic of the relocation of the Tawanka Learning Center. Dr. Muenker stated that the I.U. will become the tenant at the Tawanka Building. The Alternative Program has become a valuable asset to the community and students of Neshaminy. Dr. Muenker was present when the program was first conceived a number of years ago. The program needs a home and discussion will take place this evening to reach a conclusive nature as to where that home will be. Possible site locations: Maple Point Middle School, Carl Sandburg Middle School, or the Eisenhower Building.

The Administration has thought of a fourth idea which may be an option. Dr. Muenker directed the Board to a visual display. Dr. Muenker advised that the option for the program would be to house same at the high school campus BELC area. This will be a separate and distinct area. The recommendation and fourth option would include the Tawanka program in the BELC area.

4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

a) Relocation of the Tawanka Program

Dr. Muenker reviewed with the Board the visual display. Mr. Paradise also noted that in the future the Facilities Department and Purchasing and Receiving could also be housed at the high school facility. Dr. Muenker advised that the BELC area is currently slated to be demolished in the high school project to allow for transportation and school buses to enter and exit. The suggestion is to not demolish the area and consider options for the Tawanka program.

Dr. Muenker advised that there are many challenges that exist in retrofitting one of the middle schools in order to accommodate the Tawanka program. Also, some programmatic changes will also be necessary. Currently, the program is using 12 classrooms in the Tawanka facility. Sacrifice will be necessary in any proposed plan.

Mr. Paradise provided to the Board some more detailed information regarding the BELC area.

Mr. Paradise advised that it would be a separate facility at the high school and dedicating possibly eight classrooms depending on the organization and layout of the areas. Mr. Paradise advised that this appears to be the least expensive because the area is already classroom space and there would be less demolition. Originally, the idea was discussed that renovating the BELC and Gym 2 would cost approximately \$470,000 and renovating Eisenhower to potentially house the program would be about \$240,000. Mr. Paradise believes that the high school area could be renovated for about \$200,000. Mr. Paradise is using the figure of \$10.00 per square foot. The renovation could be done for Facilities, Purchasing, Receiving and the Alternative School for literally half the cost of what was proposed before. Tawanka would remain a rental facility and Eisenhower would be available for rent or potentially sell. If this is a workable solution and educationally sound this is a workable solution from a facility housing point of view.

Dr. Muenker advised that the challenge is to take care of all the needs, do so in a way that does not erode and protects the fiscal responsibilities that we need be conscience of. Mr. Paradise advised that if this option were chosen it would need to occur by February 1st.

Mr. Blasch is concerned about the facility for physical education for the Tawanka program. Dr. Muenker stated that the students could attend the new gym at a dedicated period for the program students and other teachers from the high school could travel to the program. Another plus is that it could be an area to get students back on the right track transitionally. Scheduling is of great concern.

Mr. Blasch questioned whether the district has changed its position on the interaction of these students with the other high school students. This was one of the reasons why the students were taken out the high school atmosphere. Dr. Muenker advised that the student schedules would be reviewed very carefully. Lunch would be delivered to the area.

Mr. O'Connor is concerned with the bathroom and gym issue and these areas need to be thought through.

Ms. Boyle is concerned that the high school is not the best location for the students. Dr. Muenker agreed that these alternative school students may have issues with large populations of students and every child brings a different profile upon the doorsteps with different levels of concerns. This

program provides very specialized attention to each of their individual issues. It is almost like having a separate IEP for every one of the students.

Dr. Spitz inquired whether a full time administrator would be provided for the program. Dr. Muenker stated that this was not to be presented at the time and this was being presented as a facility issue, not a program issue. Presentation on this fourth option does not speak about eroding the program, other than programmatic changes regarding courses or gym issues, etc.

Mr. Koutsouradis questioned the classroom space. Mr. Paradise advised that eight rooms could be made available. Currently, the program utilizes 12 classrooms.

Mr. Webb inquired as to the condition of the area at the high school. Mr. Webb noted that they are worthy of rehabilitation.

Mr. Paradise advised that more than likely the area would receive new floors, new ceilings and a rooftop, HVAC unit that would provide for heating, ventilating and air conditioning. Mr. Paradise advised that structurally the area is fine.

Mr. O'Connor is concerned about fire safety and current codes. Mr. Paradise stated that renovations have taken place in many of the school facilities and single floor classrooms with multiple exits do not have an issue.

Mr. O'Connor had some program questions and the population of the program and how are the students selected for the program and the needs to meet same. Ms. Holland advised that she has performed research based on last year and that a small handful of less than 10 students could have gone back to the high school, all others would have been outsourced to other facilities. Mr. Lambert then figured the transportation costs and then Mr. Kane calculated the tuition for each of those students and a rough estimate far surpassed the total cost of running the program by Neshaminy. The maximum number of students now is 72 students.

Mr. Eccles asked how the capacity is determined. There is an initial agreement for the NFT that was developed in 2002. The student/teacher ratio has been increased, as well as the classroom size. The program went from a maximum of 60 to 72 students. It is no more than 15 students to 1 in the classroom and no more than 12 to 1 on a case load. There are four academic teachers, Health/PE teacher, Special Education, Learning Support Teacher, and Flex Teacher and Counselor.

Mr. O'Connor was interested to know what the program consists of on a daily basis. Ms. Holland noted that the program is a seven period day. The first six periods including a lunch period the students are in academics and a PE/Health class. The program has filled rooms that are not utilized all the time. The program has a quilting room, kitchen for service learning three times a week, stand alone weight room, computer room, etc. Some changes will need to occur no matter where the program goes.

Mr. Paradise advised that the Receiving area would benefit by having a loading dock. One does not exist now, but it could be a useful item in the future.

Dr. Spitz is concerned about the 90% capacity at the high school. Dr. Spitz feels that enrollment may go up because all the construction will be complete and some parents will allow the students to return and with the economy issues there could be an influx of students from private and

parochial schools. Has that contingency been planned for? Maybe some of these classrooms need to be set aside for buffer space for the high school program rather than or in addition to the Alternative Program.

Dr. Muenker advised that this is an option which has been presented to the Board for review and consideration.

Mr. Webb thanked the Administration for thinking outside the box and any other ideas or suggestions would be a major plus.

b) High School Transition Update

Dr. Muenker advised that the district is in the process of putting to bed the course selection program booklet which is a tremendous task. The lead teachers are developing courses for next year and confirming those courses that would still be in existence. That is going to press very shortly and the middle school students will be met in plan meetings around mid January, 2009 if everything goes well. Shortly, thereafter we will be meeting and having separate dedicated meetings for the parent groups as well. Short term plans getting the information out to the current 8th and 9th graders in preparation to the transition to the high school, walk through the course selection and the options that they have for the next four years of study, followed by a meeting with the parents to help them look through the option of the children going through the same process. Small groups will be broken down to get the information provided.

5. Public Comment

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that he has always felt that the Tawanka program moving to the high school area would be a great idea. Mr. Rodos is concerned about the traffic generated by trucks and other distractions and how would that affect the students in this program. The students are there because of specific problems and they may be easily distracted.

Mr. Paradise advised that Purchasing/Receiving has been at Neshaminy Middle School for many years. Administration offices have always been at Maple Point. Mr. Paradise stated that this would be a completely separate part of the building with different entrances.

Dr. Muenker advised that the district does not want to sacrifice the intent of the program in any way.

Mr. Marv Dickler, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that the Board should want to delve into this option further to make a more educated decision on how practical this move could be. Researching it properly would be an asset and more specifics are necessary. The education level of the program needs to stay the same or improve and the economics plays a very important part.

Mr. Grant Passman, Guidance Counselor at Tawanka, has been there since it opened. Mr. Passman agreed that the rooms should be reserved for the high school students and he wanted to make it known that the students of the Alternative program are Neshaminy High School students. When the population of the high school rises (addition of 9th grade) the number of referrals to the alternative program will also rise.

Mr. O'Connor would like Mr. Paradise to follow up on costs of all the options. Mr. Paradise noted that even if the costs would be the same as renovating Eisenhower, the high school is still a logical step financially since Eisenhower will still be available for rental.

Mrs. Cummings questioned Mr. Menio as to the use of certain areas of the high school.

Mr. O'Connor felt it would be beneficial for Ms. Holland to attend an Educational Development Meeting so that discussion could begin regarding the program aspects of what this might entail.

Dr. Spitz feels that this is an excellent option to consider. Also, regarding the course selection books have been finalized and what if any changes have been made. Dr. Costanzo advised that no changes have been made. Those changes recommended are those that have been submitted for the course selection book. Review has taken place again with Dr. McGee and space is available for the recommended courses.

Mr. Koziol feels that this is a great idea. Reduce demolition costs. Eisenhower becomes available for rent or sale. Seems like an ideal situation and a great job.

6. Adjournment

Mr. Eccles thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anita E. Walls
Board Secretary