

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
November 22, 2011

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on November 22, 2011, in the Harry M. Dengler, Jr., Performing Arts Center at Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Mr. Ritchie Webb, President  
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Vice President  
Ms. Irene M. Boyle  
Mr. Scott Congdon  
Mrs. Susan Cummings  
Mr. Mike Morris  
Mr. William D. O'Connor  
Mr. William Oettinger

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

Dr. Louis T. Muenker  
Mrs. Barbara Markowitz  
Mrs. Theresa Hinterberger  
Dr. Geeta Heble  
Mr. Anthony Devlin

**BOARD MEMBER ABSENT:**

Mr. Richard M. Eccles

**OTHERS:** Approximately 400 persons from the public, staff and press

**SECRETARY:** Mrs. Jennifer Burns

**SOLICITOR:** Thomas J. Profy, IV, Esquire

Mr. William Oettinger left the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

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Mr. Webb announced that prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held where personnel issues were discussed.

**Call to Order**

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**Announcements**

None

**Board Recognition of Outgoing Board Members and Presentation of Gifts**

Dr. Muenker announced that Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Eccles were leaving the Board and presented Mr. O'Connor with books chosen by him that will be donated on his behalf to several libraries in the Neshaminy schools. Dr. Muenker thanked Mr. O'Connor for his outstanding dedication and service to the Neshaminy School District and community. Mr. Webb accepted a plaque on behalf of Mr. Eccles for his dedication and service to the Neshaminy School District for the past 13 years.

**Superintendent's Report**

Dr. Muenker advised the Board on the following:

- On December 9, 2011, Lower Southampton Elementary School will be holding a "Career Awareness Day."
- NHS's Family & Consumer Science Students Prepared the Annual Thanksgiving Feast.
- Oliver Heckman raised \$376.00 for Alex's Lemonade Stand.
- TLC guidance counselor and founder of service learning within the school, Mr. Grant Passman, was interviewed by WOGL, FM 98.1.

- Neshaminy High School store will be open to the public for the Annual Evening Holiday Sale on December 8th, from 6:00 – 8:30 p.m.
- 2011 – 2012 Personal and per capita taxes are due by December 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Public Comment**

Karen Gatewood, parent, Levittown, commented that the NFT has shown the community half-truths, statements with no factual support, excessive spin, and two “Work to Contract” actions. In comparison, the Board has shown truth, factual statements and a group of volunteers who put children first. Ms. Gatewood said her support for the Board does not mean that she is against the teaching profession. She said she is thankful to the many conscientious and dedicated teachers in Neshaminy. She also thanked the Board for putting the children first, while at the same time trying to reach a fair contract and she thanked Mr. O’Connor for his years of service to the community.

Daniel O’Connor, West Chester University student, Langhorne, said that as a past student of Neshaminy he was inspired by many great teachers. He said that he recently attended an executive leadership retreat, which taught the meaning of being a great leader. He stated that he learned that a great leader will admit to his mistakes and learn from them. Mr. O’Connor asked the leadership of the NFT to think about and admit to their mistakes and decide how to fix them for the benefit of their membership, the community and the students. Mr. O’Connor concluded by expressing his admiration to his father for his years of service to the School Board and for being a great leader.

Tracy Capecci, Neshaminy teacher, Langhorne, thanked the support and certified staff at Hoover Elementary School for making the school an outstanding place of education. Ms. Capecci said that she looks at the Neshaminy employees, alumni, students and community members as members of a large family. Ms. Capecci said that for the past four years she has not seen a level of urgency from the Board to settle the contract. She implored Dr. Muenker to urge the Board to find a sense of urgency that is needed to come to an agreement with the NFT. She said that no one wants to see a strike, but the School Board has to be committed to ending this battle and the meetings should increase in frequency until the contract is settled.

Al Lykon, Neshaminy teacher, Bristol Township, stated that he teaches fifth grade at Walter Miller Elementary School. He said that his commitment to the district started when he was a teaching volunteer at Herbert Hoover Elementary School when he was in college. His loyalty to Neshaminy has continued to present day and he said that the NFT’s latest proposal has his full support and he urged the Board to settle the contract.

Doug Cimino, Neshaminy teacher, Hatfield, PA, said he has taught and coached in the district for fourteen years. He stated that he is dedicated and committed to the students as are the other teachers in his union. He said that he supports the NFT’s latest proposal even though it includes concessions that will mean lost wages and increased health care costs to his family. He urged the Board to settle the contract quickly for the children of the district.

Viki Guarrieri, Neshaminy teacher, Newtown, remarked that although she has worked without a contract for the last four years, she still continues to demonstrate her commitment to the students and community through her teaching duties. She declared that she is supporting the NFT’s proposal even though it will cost her in salary, co-pays and the loss of retirement benefits. She asked the Board to settle the contract quickly for the good of the younger teachers in the district.

Charles Alfonso, semi-retired business executive, Langhorne, said that since 2007 Neshaminy’s SAT’s scores and PSSA placement has disturbingly been deteriorating. He said that while the NFT’s and teachers actions against students have been largely to blame, there have been other causes to the down fall of the Neshaminy educational system – namely, the obsolete and ineffective curriculum being taught.

Marvin Dickler, Villages of Flowers Mill, publicly apologized to Mr. William O’Connor for his initial lack of confidence when Mr. O’Connor ran for the position of School Board member. Mr. Dickler said that Mr.

O'Connor put politics aside and has proven to the public that he is dedicated to the students of Neshaminy. Mr. Dickler thanked Mr. O'Connor for his service and said he will be missed.

Syd White, Neshaminy teacher, defended the Neshaminy educational curriculum by stating there are many valuable tools that are being used to prepare students for the future. He said that there is always room for improvement, but the curriculum that is being taught is not inferior or substandard. He ended by remarking that now is the time for the Board to settle the contract.

Stephen Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, reflected on statements in the media from the NFT leadership that only in the last two months has the Board provided accurate information regarding the negotiations. Mr. Pirritano said that as a lay-person he has had no problem getting access to this information, while the NFT claims it has taken them four years. He said the NFT has misrepresented facts to the community time and time again and yet they have the audacity to say the Board should be more honest in presenting the facts to the community. Mr. Pirritano said the community and the Board are serious about compromise, but the compromise must start from a position that is affordable.

Almando Carrasquillo, private investigator, Langhorne, said that it was absurd for a Neshaminy teacher to ask Dr. Muenker to pressure the Board to come to an agreement with the NFT, because Dr. Muenker's responsibilities are to the students. Mr. Carrasquillo said that the taxpayers of Neshaminy have lost \$64 million over the years due to the side letter of agreement, which, in his opinion, is illegal. He said that the rating of Neshaminy School District has been declining and yet the NFT wants more money. He said the NFT will not get anything more than what is offered by the Board. He concluded by thanking Mr. O'Connor for his service.

Larry Pastor, business executive, Middletown, thanked Mr. O'Connor for going above and beyond in his service to the community. He said that Mr. O'Connor's blog has been completely truthful and factual. Mr. Pastor remarked that Mr. O'Connor has fought for the students, for fairness and for the district and he has the gratitude of the community, taxpayers and parents of Neshaminy.

Steve Rodos, substitute Neshaminy teacher, Villages of Flowers Mill, expressed his appreciation to Ms. Hinterberger and staff for assisting him with a Human Resources matter. Mr. Rodos also thanked Mr. O'Connor for his work on behalf of Neshaminy students. He stated that in order for a new contract to be agreed upon, both sides will need to negotiate downwards. Mr. Rodos remarked that he thinks the current curriculum is appropriate and suitable by today's standards.

#### **Presentation on the latest contract offers between the School Board and the NFT**

Mr. Webb gave a slideshow presentation outlining the differences in the latest contract offers between the School Board and the NFT. Mr. Webb stated that the teacher's latest offer would cost Neshaminy about \$29.3 million through the 2013-2014 school year and the Board's latest proposal would cost the district about \$11.6 million. Mr. Webb said if the district were to accept the union's offer, the Board would be forced to raise taxes to the Act 1 limit, which is set at an additional \$1.9 million for next year and it would also deplete most of the district's reserves and force the Board to cut additional programs. Mr. Webb said that paying for the previous contract led to a 31 percent increase in the district's annual operating budget while decreasing the savings fund by 67 percent. He also said that under the current contract that remains in place today, teachers who retire with at least 10 years of service in the district received \$27,500 and continued coverage for spouses and dependents. Officials have acknowledged that this provision was written into the previous bargaining agreement through a "side letter" and not presented to the public at the time, which in turn, has cost the district about \$35 million over the last 10 years.

In putting it in perspective, Mr. Webb stated that the current economic climate and the fiscal constraints facing the school district today are unprecedented. The country is in the grips of a major recession and revenue sources are dwindling. Compounding this situation is the effect of Act I on the ability of a district to raise revenues and the decreased market values of real estate property, the primary source of tax revenues for a

school district. In addition, districts are facing a looming crisis presented by the expanding cost of PSERS. While this is certainly not the fault of the NFT or the District, it is the current situation in which we find ourselves. These challenges require innovative approaches to bargaining. There must be a balancing between ever increasing healthcare costs and the limited economic resources available in the foreseeable future. In view of this, any proposals for salaries and benefits must be seen in tandem with health care costs and other expenses as part of a package that, hopefully, will lead to a contract.

(The full presentation can be found on Neshaminy's website.)

(Mrs. Cummings was temporarily called away from the meeting.)

### **Approval of Minutes**

Mrs. Burns presented the minutes of October 25, 2011 Public Board Meeting and November 9, 2011 Public Work Session Meeting. Upon motion of Mr. O'Connor and seconded by Ms. Boyle the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the October 25, 2011 Public Board Meeting and the November 9, 2011 Public Work Session Meeting by a vote of 6 ayes, and zero nays. (Mr. Eccles, Mr. Oettinger, and Mrs. Cummings were not present.)

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

Mrs. Markowitz presented the following for approval:

- October, 2011 Treasurer's Report, subject to audit
- Check Register – October, 2011
- Personal and per capita tax exonerations for October, 2011
- Budget Transfer Report Working Copy – 21-1
- Investment Summary

Mrs. Markowitz clarified that there was one certificate of deposit purchase at the end of October at the rate of .2% to the Pennsylvania School District Liquid Asset Fund for \$5 million dollars but it should read \$50 million dollars.

Mr. Congdon moved the October, 2011 Treasurer's Report be approved, subject to audit, Check Register for October, 2011, Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations for October, 2011, Budget Transfer Report Working Copy 12-1, and Investment Summary be approved. Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion.

Mr. Morris wanted it noted that the certified staff is paid approximately 37% if they choose to opt out of the healthcare coverage, which amounts to a cost of approximately \$114,000.

The Board approved said reports by a vote of five ayes, and one nay, (Mr. Morris.) (Mr. Eccles, Mr. Oettinger, and Mrs. Cummings were not present.)

### **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
- Sabbatical Leaves – Certified Personnel

Dr. Muenker advised the Board that on page 49 of their packets, to rescind candidate number 2 and that position will be reposted. He also stated that on page 50 under long-term substitutes to rescind candidates 2 and 3 and those positions will be reposted.

Dr. Muenker recommended the approval of the personnel report for certified and support personnel.

Mr. Koutsouradis moved the Certified and Support Personnel Reports be approved. Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said reports. (Mr. Eccles and Mr. Oettinger were not present.)

**Motion: Contracted Transportation Services for 2011 - 12**

Mr. Morris presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the school district transports public, private, and parochial school students in accordance with the applicable state laws; and

WHEREAS, private contractors are sometimes used if it is more practical and less expensive to do so with other than district staff and vehicles.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors authorizes the administration to enter into a private contract for the 2011-12 school year for the transportation of certain students in accordance with state regulations as follows:

Contract Lakeside Youth Services	\$64,908
TOTAL	\$64,908

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Acting Business Administrator is authorized to sign this contract on behalf of the school district.

Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion by a vote of seven ayes, zero nays. (Mr. Eccles and Mr. Oettinger were not present.)

**Motion: Student Discipline Action**

Mr. Koutsouradis presented the following Motion:

WHEREAS, a disciplinary hearing of the Neshaminy School Board of Directors, was held of October 27, 2011.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy School Board of Directors accepts the recommendation of the Neshaminy School District administration and hereby determines that the Student be expelled from the Neshaminy School District and approves the adjudication prepared by the solicitor.

Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion by a vote of seven ayes, zero nays. (Mr. Eccles and Mr. Oettinger were not present.)

**Federal Programs**

Dr. Muenker advised the Board that there were three additional grants. The Generation On Grant in the amount of \$250.00, a Preschool Early Intervention Grant in the amount of \$9,458.00, and State Early intervention Grant in the amount of \$11,205.00 for a total of \$1,192,901.00.

**Other Board Business**

None

**Public Comment**

Stephen Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, asked the Board to comment on whether they have decided to appeal the grievance that was lost regarding the side-letter issue. He asked if the Board would consider featuring the taxpayer's press conference of October 20<sup>th</sup> on Neshaminy TV, because it would be beneficial for the public to see how community members are involved in settling the contract dispute. Mr. Pirritano corrected a statement that he made at the last Public Meeting. He noted that the side-letter regarding the Voluntary Early Retirement Plan was written from Mr. Knowles to Dr. Bowman, not the opposite as he mistakenly had reported. Mr. Pirritano expressed his disappointment that Mr. Eccles evaded the question of the side-letter and declined to clarify his position at the time the side-letter agreement was made.

Dr. William Spitz, former Neshaminy Board member, Middletown, thanked Mr. O'Connor for his outstanding service to the community. Dr. Spitz said he has been an inspiration in the thoughtful and professional way he has contributed. He encouraged the new Board members to follow Mr. O'Connor's example to insure that they represent Neshaminy as well as Mr. O'Connor has.

Larry Pastor, business executive, Middletown, congratulated Mr. Webb on the presentation of the Neshaminy School Board's Community Update on the contract proposals stating that the clarity and comprehensibility was exceptional. He suggested that longevity pay and other financial aspects that have cost the district millions should also be mentioned in Board comment. Mr. Pastor said that the Board has been outstanding and he knows it will continue to be outstanding and stand up to the greediness of the NFT.

**Board Comment**

Mrs. Cummings thanked Mr. O'Connor for his years of dedicated service to the Neshaminy School Board and said he will surely be missed.

Mr. O'Connor expressed his appreciation to those who supported him during his term as a School Board member, namely his wife, Marianne, his four children, Dr. Muenker, the administration and staff, Tom Miller and assistants, Mr. Profy, Mr. Sweet, Bill Gulla, John Toth, William Spitz, the Democratic Party of Middletown Township, his fellow Neshaminy School Board members and the President of the Board, Richie Webb. Mr. O'Connor also thanked the certified staff of Neshaminy for being caring and compassionate people who are committed to the education and personal growth of their students. Mr. O'Connor advised the NFT that there most likely will not be a middle ground solution. He stated that the teachers should negotiate for a more meaningful agreement. He advised them to seek changes to the CBA that will augment their own personal growth. He informed the teachers that by implementing ideas that will enhance their work in the classroom they will gain the support of parents, students, taxpayers and the School Board. Mr. O'Connor thanked the concerned citizens in Neshaminy who have taken the time to learn more about the district, attended the public meetings, stood up for the students, and have done all the necessary things to bring about beneficial change. Mr. O'Connor concluded by declaring that he is proud to be a resident of Neshaminy and proud to have served this School District and community.

Mr. Koutsouradis thanked Mr. O'Connor for everything he has done for the School Board and said that he will miss him.

Mr. Webb said he appreciated Mr. O'Connor's kind remarks and declared how much he has appreciated Mr. O'Connor's friendship. He stated that without Mr. O'Connor's and Dr. Spitz's cooperation, their work on the School Board would not have been as successful. Mr. Webb added that the Board was grateful to Mr. Eccles for his years of service to the Neshaminy School Board. In response to Mr. Pastor's inquiry he said that the Board has been discussing the grievance issue and continues to do so. He added that the additional expensed that Mr. Pastor outlined are all part of the increased cost. He informed the public that the former Neshaminy Middle School property was sold to St. Mary Medical Center for approximately \$6.6 million. Mr. Webb ended by stating the power point presentation will be available to view on the website.

**Adjournment**

Mr. O'Connor moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Burns  
Board Secretary