

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

WORK SESSION/PUBLIC BOARD SESSION MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
August 27, 2013

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public work session/public board session on August 27, 2013 in the District Offices Board Room at the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Mr. Ritchie Webb, President  
Mr. Scott E. Congdon, Vice President  
Ms. Irene Boyle  
Mrs. Susan Cummings  
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis (arrived 7:22 p.m.)  
Mr. Mike Morris  
Mr. William Oettinger  
Mr. Mark Shubin  
Mr. Anthony Sposato

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

Mr. Robert Copeland  
Mrs. Barbara Markowitz  
Dr. Geeta Heble  
Mrs. Theresa Hinterberger  
Mr. Anthony Devlin

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

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

**SECRETARY:** Mrs. Jennifer Burns

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

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Mr. Webb stated that prior to the meeting an Executive Session was held.

**PUBLIC WORK SESSION**

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**3. Announcements**

None

**4. Superintendent's Report**

Mr. Copeland advised the Board on the following:

- Inaugural jumpstart program at Neshaminy High School.
- Full-day kindergarten program.

**5. Public Comment**

Kevin Gallagher, IT analyst, residing in Middletown Township, stated that every decision comes with a price. Mr. Gallagher said in order to keep neighborhood schools the cost would result in less money for academic programs. He urged the Board and the public to consider all the consequences and to make wise decisions.

Angie Manning, New Jersey teacher, residing in Langhorne, remarked that the increased availability of programs from neighborhood schools lead to well-rounded children and transparency should be the goal of every local governmental agency. She said that decisions should have support of the local population. Ms.

Manning presented the Board with a petition with 1,260 signatures requesting a referendum on the consolidation project.

Ed Kern, retired school district administrator, residing in Levittown, declared that he is not in favor of building a new super school, nor is closing neighborhood elementary schools the right thing to do. Mr. Kern voiced concern about the costs and the amount of money that is available to borrow for the project. He said those opposed to the consolidation project would like to see the elementary schools brought up to standards and keep them open. He called on the Board to support the referendum.

Gene Sonn, editor, residing in Langhorne Borough, said that many residents are not aware of the consolidation proposal and this is an excellent reason for supporting the referendum. Mr. Sonn said there are many questions about the cost of the consolidation that are unanswered and he urged the Board to inform the public more completely.

Ella, student at Heckman Elementary School, said she would greatly miss her school if it was closed and she pleaded with the Board to keep her school open.

Faith, student at Heckman Elementary School, stated that she loves her school and does not want it to close.

Jennifer Wallover, teacher, residing in Levittown, said that the reasons presented for consolidation are not necessarily what they appear to be. She explained that decreased enrollment does not mean empty classrooms; it only means fewer students per class. Ms. Wallover voiced concern about the prospect of selling three school buildings simultaneously. She also said the taxpayers will be paying interest and principle for twenty years on old debt plus the cost of the new building.

Francine Ott, medical laboratory technologist, residing in Levittown, stated that the children deserve the neighborhood schools that have been a part of Middletown Township for many years. She said when schools are lost then community is also lost. Ms. Ott said that less than half the students will benefit from this project.

Leann Hartpence, housewife, residing in Middletown Township, said she understands the strong feelings of those parents who want to keep their neighborhood school; however, she feels that the district's money should be used to provide a quality education. Ms. Hartpence said that keeping schools open that are underutilized and renovating buildings is a waste of funds. She urged the Board to consider the district as a whole and not turn it over to a referendum vote.

Raina Shoemaker, part-time sales representative, residing in Middletown Township, remarked that putting money into schools for renovations is a waste of money. She said this would take money away from the children's education. She urged the Board not to choose a referendum.

Jim Jenca, retired, residing in Middletown Township, asked for an explanation of PlanCon and further enlightenment regarding the costs of the consolidation project. He asked the Board for a referendum to let the taxpayers decide on the project.

Reita Bakshi, mother, residing in Middletown Township, said that when all is said and done, the thing that matters the most is the quality of education that the students will receive. Ms. Bakshi stated that if the consolidation will put more money into new educational programs then that is the direction we should take. She urged the Board to consider education first when deciding about the consolidation project.

Donna Regan, registered nurse, residing in Feasterville, asked the Board to avoid a referendum stating that it would only divide the district. She said that the project should go forward without a referendum.

Charles Alfonso, retired, residing in Langhorne, remarked that if the consolidation project goes through school taxes may not be increased, but the taxpayers will be paying for the debt for many, many years to come.

Stephan Pirritano, self-employed, residing in Feasterville, said that while he would love to see neighborhood schools continue forever, it is simply not practical anymore. He reiterated that the PSERS crisis is coming, for which the district will be paying \$12 million. Mr. Pirritano said that the need to consolidate in order to bring the education level up to the 21st century standards is paramount. He said it is time to stop spending money on renovating old buildings and put the money on education. He called for no referendum.

#### **6. Items for Approval Tonight**

Mr. Copeland advised the Board on the following:

- a) **Non-Renewal and Demotion of Staff**
- b) **Approval of Agreement with the Office of Civil Rights**
- c) **Approval of request for Sunday usage at Neshaminy High School by the Bucks County Bulldogs.**
- d) **Overnight Trips**
  - **Neshaminy High School Cheerleading Team to Reach the Beach National Competition, Ocean City, Maryland - February 22- 23, 2013.**
  - **Neshaminy High School Vocal Adjudication and Performance Trip to Orlando/Bahamas - April 4 to 8, 2014.**

#### **7. Committee Reports**

a) **Board Policies**

Ms. Boyle advised the Board that no date has been set for the next meeting as of yet.

b) **Educational Development**

Mr. Shubin informed the Board that there is nothing new to report.

c) **Finance/Facilities**

Mr. Webb advised the Board that a date has not yet been set.

d) **IU Board**

Mrs. Cummings stated to the Board that the first meeting will be held on September 17th.

e) **Neshaminy Education Foundation**

Mr. Copeland informed the Board that there was nothing new to report.

f) **Technical School**

Mr. Congdon informed the Board that the Tech School is renovating two bathrooms and they hired a new assistant principal.

g) **Technology**

Mr. Shubin advised the Board that a date has not yet been set.

h) **Ad Hoc Facility Use Update**

Mr. Oettinger announced to the Board that there was no new information to report at this time.

#### **8. Future Topics**

None

#### **9. Agenda Development for the August 27, 2013 Public Board Meeting**

Mr. Webb stated that an addendum has been added regarding the Eisenhower sale.

**10. Other Board Business**

None.

**11. Adjournment of Meeting**

Mr. Webb moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Congdon seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

**PUBLIC BOARD SESSION**

**Call to Order**

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:56 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes**

Mrs. Burns presented the minutes of June 13, 2013, June 18, 2013 and July 16, 2013. Upon motion of Mr. Shubin and seconded by Mr. Morris the Board unanimously approved the minutes of June 13, 2013, June 18, 2013, and July 16, 2013 Board Meeting.

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

Mrs. Markowitz presented the following for approval:

- June and July, 2013 Treasurer's Report, subject to audit
- Check Register – June and July, 2013
- Investments
- Personal and per capita tax exonerations for June, 2013

Mr. Congdon moved the June and July, 2013, Treasurer's Report, subject to audit, Check Register for June and July, 2013, Investments, and the Personal and per capita tax exonerations for June, 2013 be approved. Ms. Boyle seconded the motion.

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

**Certified and Support Personnel Actions**

Mr. Copeland presented the following for approval:

- Elections – Certified Personnel
- Resignations and Leaves of Absence – Certified Personnel
- Elections – Support Personnel
- Resignation Leaves - Support Personnel
- Extra Curricular Staff and Salary Report

Mr. Webb made a motion to separate Item #10 on page 88 and Mr. Congdon seconded the motion.

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

Mr. Shubin moved the Certified and Support Personnel Reports and the Extra Curricular Staff and Salary Report be approved, with the exception of the separated item on page 88 item#10. Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

The motion passed by a vote of eight ayes and zero nays, and one abstention. (Mr. Morris abstained for the reason being the current Board Policy on hiring practices.)

Mr. Webb made a motion to accept the dismissal of Mr. Thomas Porter and Mr. Shubin seconded the motion.

Mr. Shubin asked for clarification on who Mr. Porter is and the reason for his termination.

Mr. Webb stated that Mr. Porter is the co-curricular assistant wrestling coach who was charged and put into incarceration.

Mr. Profy added that notice was given and Mr. Porter was afforded the opportunity to have Board action in the nature of a hearing. Since he did not come forward the Board is in a position to terminate his extra-curricular contract. He is not an employee of the school district.

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

**Motion: Non-Renewal and Demotion of staff**

Mr. Webb presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, The Board of School Directors directed Superintendent, Business Administrator and such other members of the School District's Administration team who the Superintendent deemed necessary to undertake various studies related to program requirements, staffing capacities and needs; and

WHEREAS, The Superintendent and other School District Officials did conduct such studies and prepared for consideration by the board, a plan detailing such findings and recommendations to these matters, and

WHEREAS, The Superintendent and other School District Officials have recommended the curtailment or alteration of the District's Education Program as set forth in the attached letter to the Pennsylvania Department of Education incorporated into this Resolution; and

WHEREAS, The Board hereby concurs with the Superintendent's recommendation and authorizes the Superintendent to undertake such measure as are necessary and prudent to implement the recommended courses of action to undertake such other actions as are necessary to advance and to carry into effect the purposes of this Resolution.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Board of School Directors approves the annexed curtailment or alteration of the District's Educational Program and approves the resulting non-renewal and demotion of certified staff as per the attached list effective September 4, 2013.

Mr. Sposato seconded the motion.

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

**Motion: Approval of Agreement with the Office of Civil Rights**

Ms. Boyle presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, Neshaminy School District is committed to providing equivalent athletic opportunities for members of both sexes in the provision of equipment and supplies, to providing equivalent benefits, treatment, services and opportunities and to ensuring that private funding in its athletic programs does not result in inequitable benefits, treatment, services and opportunities for student/athletes on the basis of their sex, in compliance with Title IX of Educational Amendments 1972 (Title IX), 20 U.S.C. § 1681 and its implementing regulations at 34 C.F.R. Part 1 of 6.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors herewith approves the annexed Resolution Agreement, dated August 27, 2013, and



Mr. Webb made a motion to accept Mr. Profy's report and Mr. Congdon seconded the motion.

Mr. Morris asked if this is referring to the Comcast building and if they are looking for any tax abatement.

Mr. Profy stated that it is the Comcast building and that this was an appeal that the school district filed because the Board of Assessment had reduced the assessment in 2012. It was researched and the property was inspected and an evaluation was done. The conclusion was that the action taken by the Board of Assessment that the assessment of \$105,600 was appropriate and there was no need to litigate.

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

#### **Federal Programs**

Mrs. Markowitz advised the Board that there were four additional grants, which brings the total for federal programs and grants to \$979,169.00.

#### **Other Board Business**

None

#### **Public Comment**

Charles Alfonso, retired, residing in Middletown Township, said that public school boards across the country are able to make decisions for taxpayers without consulting with them; however, some states such as New Jersey require referendums on any decisions exceeding 2% of the district's budget. He said that there is serious division on this subject and a referendum is required.

Steve Rodos, retired, residing in the Villages of Flowers Mill, voiced surprised that some residents are against consolidation, because many people are surprised at how old and out of condition the buildings are. He said he supports the consolidation, because renovating these old buildings would be a waste of money and the education of the students should be the primary focus.

Jim Jenca, retired, residing in Middletown Township, said the group that is against the consolidation wants the buildings to be updated and made more efficient. He said the buildings should have been cared for all along as a means of protecting our assets. He asked for a referendum.

Raina Shoemaker, part-time sales representative, residing in Middletown Township, stated that investing in the assets is a huge injustice to the students. She said the money should be used towards education and she does not want a referendum.

Cassandra Fox, teacher, residing in Middletown Township, said that all studies show that super schools are detrimental to students. She stated that she wants to see the neighborhood schools in the Neshaminy District remain open.

Jonathan Ciccoletti, teacher, residing in Middletown Township, said that he was very sorry to see programs such as middle school foreign language and 10th grade physical education eliminated several years ago, because these programs help contribute to a well-rounded student. Mr. Ciccolettie said that main priority is not whether to have a tax increase, but rather to have Neshaminy students get a quality education.

Jessica Merz, teacher, residing in Levittown, said that it is very important to her to retain neighborhood schools. She said as a teacher she has firsthand knowledge that smaller schools provide better individual attention and give the student more sense of community. Ms. Merz said the students get more opportunity for extracurricular activities in a smaller school. She asked the Board to put the issue to a referendum so the taxpayers can have a voice in the matter.

Reita Bakshi, mother, residing in Middletown Township, remarked that she attended a school, which was K through 12 and experienced no adverse affect from the experience.

Stephen Pirritano, self-employed, residing in Feasterville, said that the Board members are elected to represent the people of the district and are authorized to make decisions on their behalf. He said one of the reasons for the consolidation is to provide extra money for extracurricular activities as well as enhancing educational programs.

Jennifer Wallover, teacher, residing in Levittown, asked the Board to be more inclusive of the data used in statistics when gathering information about student enrollment. She said many children in the district are not counted because they were not born in the district and, therefore, are not included in the statistics.

#### **Board Comment**

Mr. Shubin stated that the decision to not use McKissick for the project is because bids were presented and the most favorable firm was chosen. He added that it is not uncommon that the planner-consultant does not necessarily end up as the firm which is chosen for the project. Mr. Shubin said there is a website link regarding PlanCon. PlanCon is the process by which a school district would undertake a major construction project and seeks reimbursement from the state. Mr. Shubin read a prepared statement in which he outlined the goals that the Board has for Neshaminy School District to provide a comfortable environment for the students as we move forward.

Mr. Sposato advised the public to go to the website and read the information so they can make an informed decision about the issues and not base it on emotion. He assured the public that the members of the Board will not make a decision until they are aware of all the facts.

Mr. Webb expressed his regret that the public is divided over the consolidation issue in the aftermath of the solidarity that was present during the teacher's contract impasse. He said that he is hopeful that more answers will be provided at the next meeting and a settlement can be achieved.

#### **Adjournment**

Mr. Webb moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Shubin seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 8:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Burns  
Board Secretary