

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
March 17, 2014

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on March 17, 2014, in the Harry M. Dengler, Jr. Performing Arts Center at Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Mr. Scott Congdon, President  
Ms. Irene M. Boyle, Vice President  
Mr. John Allen  
Mrs. Susan Cummings  
Mr. Mike Morris  
Mr. Stephen Pirritano  
Mr. Ron Rudy  
Mr. Mark Shubin  
Mr. Anthony Sposato

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

Mr. Robert L. Copeland  
Mrs. Barbara Markowitz

**BOARD MEMBER ABSENT:**

**OTHERS:** Approximately 30 persons from the public, staff and press

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

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**Call to Order**

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

**Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**Announcements**

Mr. Congdon made a brief announcement that the Board of School Directors will be voting this evening to rescind the hearing process for the closure of Walter Miller Elementary School.

**Superintendent's Report**

None

**Comments from the Public**

Mr. Ralph Clark, former school board member, had a conversation with Mr. Ritchie Webb about what they did previously when he served on the Board. In 1994, Miller, Ferderbar, Sandburg, Maple Point and the Tech School were renovated because we needed the space since we had 11,000 students districtwide. At that time, the district was able to raise taxes 6%-7% in order to handle the building needs. Mr. Clark said he was glad we will be rescinding the motion to close Walter Miller. In 1994, we went around this building and we were able to give it new foundations, floors, roof, like a new school. We did not renovate Everitt, Schweitzer or Lower Southampton Elementary Schools. If we close a school, at least look at one where nothing has been done. Dr. Bowman established this process. Mr. Clark said that when he was a Board Member, 400 - 500 was the optimal size and they were designed as neighborhood schools. He suggested we reorganize the grades. Since Sandburg and Poquessing have pools, maybe do something where all students get a chance to go there. He stated that he is not trying to interfere, but we should be developing a process. At Miller, we added the library; at Ferderbar, we added the gym; and at Sandburg, we added the auditorium. We cannot look to destroy the buildings that were renovated. For 6 years, he chaired the Building Committee.

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Mr. Eric Shaeffer said he visited all the elementary schools and looked at them from a capital development perspective. Miller Elementary School is far superior structurally than any school in the district. His profession is construction. When schools are closed, housing values drop. If Miller is closed, you will have to add three more busses to transport students and this is added fuel costs and added bus drivers. He stated that not one school slated for closing is in a board member's area. He stated that central air at Miller would be nice, that is the only thing that is missing. If you take the median out of the parking lot, you would have plenty of space.

Ms. Debbie Letham spoke about Miller Elementary and why it was named Miller. She is requesting that this decision be proper and not rushed. She talked about the Principal and how good he is and that all the staff is wonderful. She gave examples of why Miller is great, teachers and other things.

#### **Board Comment**

Mr. Mike Morris questioned the fifth graders moving to the middle schools. He said at the Ad Hoc Committee, it was talked about in conjunction with a school closing.

Mr. Scott Congdon explained what that this meeting is about just the closing of the Walter Miller Elementary School.

A person from the audience asked about the fifth grade moving to the middle schools and Mr. Congdon explained that this will not happen in the 2014 – 15 school year.

#### **Motion: APPROVAL OF THE CANCELLATION OF THE PUBLIC HEARING**

Mr. Congdon presented the following motion:

Consider and act upon the cancellation of the Public Hearing on the permanent closure of Walter Miller Elementary School at the end of the 2013 – 2014 school year scheduled for Monday, Marcy 17, 2014 and Tuesday, March 18, 2014 at 7 p.m. and the rescission of the prior Board actions pertaining to the closure; and the taking of such other actions as may lawfully come before the Special Meeting.

Mr. John Allen seconded the motion and it was approved with 8 ayes (Mr. Congdon, Ms. Boyle, Mr. Allen, Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Pirritano, Mr. Rudy and Mr. Shubin); 1 nay (Mr. Morris) and 0 abstentions.

Mrs. Susan Cummings commented that when Tawanka Elementary and Neshaminy Middle closed, her property value did not get reduced and she lived in the areas where both schools were located. We sold Neshaminy Middle School to St. Mary Medical Center and Tawanka is currently being used by the Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22.

Mr. Anthony Sposato, who lives in the Miller area, said his sons went to Miller. It is not easy to close a school, so when the studies came back, it did not make sense. We are trying to make good decisions.

Mr. Stephen Pirritano said that the 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade model recommendation came out of the Ad Hoc Committee. He stated that Mr. Copeland said at the last meeting that this would not work for the 2014 – 15 school year. He said we need to develop work study groups to further develop this concept and the earliest it would be implemented would be for the 2015 – 16 school year.

Mr. John Allen, who also lives near Miller, said we need to be looking at schools with the best interests of the entire district. He said we need to see where the numbers make sense and this has to happen. We are not targeting certain neighborhoods, but please keep that in mind that everyone ends up at one high school at the end. We need to save programs and sacrifices have to be made.

Mr. Scott Congdon apologized and he said he is trying to keep to the agenda. A lot of facts stated here have been about Miller Elementary, and that is why this meeting was held today.

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Ms. Irene Boyle said the reason we have meetings is that it is easier for everyone to understand. The Board speaks, the public speaks and it is too hard to go back and forth.

Adjournment

Mr. Congdon moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Pirritano seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Congdon adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Barbara Markowitz  
Business Administrator