

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
March 27, 2012

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on March 27, 2012, 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 Oettinger
Mr. Mark Shubin
Mr. Anthony Sposato

ADMINISTRATORS:

Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Mrs. Barbara Markowitz
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan
Mrs. Theresa Hinterberger
Mr. Anthony Devlin

BOARD MEMBER ABSENT:

OTHERS: Approximately 65 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Jennifer Burns

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

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

Call to Order

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:09.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Announcements

None

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Muenker advised the Board on the following:

- Update on the 2011 – 2012 school calendar. Last day of school for students will be June 15th, and graduation date will be June 13th. Teaching staff's last day will be June 25th.
- The Science Club at Neshaminy High School is proud to announce that three students entered the Science Research Competition at Delaware Valley College on March 14th, 2012. Sophomores, James Tuttle and Jasmin Tharakan, won 1st and 3rd place, respectively, in the Behavior and Social Science division. James Tuttle did his research on feeding patterns of fish and Jasmin Tharakan performed research on age and memory. Junior, Gerrard Tessier, won first place in the Physics division performing research on the coefficient of friction of different types of bicycle tires on a certain surface.
- Neshaminy High School Interact Club and Adviser Suzi Drake won 2012 American Red Cross Heroes Award – Community Partner Hero.

Solicitor's Report

Mr. Profy concurred that if passed into law, state Senate Bill 1309 would severely restrict school districts and municipalities from appealing property assessments that they feel might be low; however makes no changes in the rights of property owners, residential, commercial and industrial properties to challenge their assessments

in the event that their perception is that their property is over assessed. Therefore, Mr. Profy recommends that if the Board wants to take action, the appropriate action would be to make a motion to oppose the adoption of state Senate Bill 1309.

Mr. Webb made a motion to oppose the adoption of state Senate Bill 1309.

Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Public Comment

Angie Manning, Langhorne, public school teacher in New Jersey, requested that parents of kindergarten students being registered for the upcoming school year be notified before July 31st, whether their child will be attending the am or pm sessions.

Charles Alfonso, Langhorne, semi-retired, presented statistics on the academic ranking of Neshaminy within the state. Mr. Alfonso maintains that the administration has been withholding this information from the public. He said that Neshaminy ranks 183 in the state for test results of AP students. He said in AP tests 42 percent ranked higher than Neshaminy, in SAT tests 40 percent ranked higher than Neshaminy and in PSSA tests 49 percent ranked higher than Neshaminy.

Steve Rodos, Villages of Flower Mills, semi- retired, commented that the lack of a tax increase over the past few years has been detrimental to the Neshaminy School District. He said the he still believes a 15-20 percent contribution towards health benefits for all staff members should be required and the benefits for retirees should be eliminated. He said that the Board has allowed the impasse with the teachers to overshadow everything else and they have lost focus on their duties towards the students of Neshaminy. He said issues such as the closing of schools, full day kindergarten, building of a new elementary school, and raising taxes should be concentrated on and the teacher's contract has little to do with these issues.

Larry Pastor, Middletown, business executive, said that he has reviewed the Salary and Benefit Schedule for the Neshaminy teachers and he asked Ms. Markowitz to clarify and break down the actual costs during Board Comment. Mr. Pastor said that taxes should not be raised on the struggling taxpayers in this economy. Mr. Pastor said that, in light of the \$12 million budget deficit, the Ad Hoc committee should study the options of closing buildings and alternate sourcing of services and this should begin now rather than when the contract expires with the Support Staff.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Burns presented the minutes of February 28, 2012 Public Meeting. Upon motion of Mrs. Cummings and seconded by Mr. Oettinger the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the February 28, 2012 Public Meeting.

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

Mrs. Markowitz presented the following for approval:

- February, 2012 Treasurer's Report, subject to audit
- Check Register – February, 2012
- Personal and per capita tax exonerations for February, 2012
- Investment Summary
- Budget Transfer (Working Copy 12 -4)

Mr. Koutsouradis moved the February, 2012 Treasurer's Report be approved, subject to audit, Check Register for February, 2012, Investment Summary, Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy 12 – 4), and the Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations for February, 2012 be approved. Mr. Sposato seconded the motion.

Mr. Morris asked why the Blue Cross Blue Shield total for the month of February was lower.

Mrs. Markowitz responded that due to the strike there was a credit for the month of February.

Mr. Morris asked if the opt out was included in that number.

Mrs. Markowitz responded yes.

Mr. Morris asked if the opt out was for the entire district.

Mrs. Markowitz responded it was for the entire district.

Mr. Morris asked if they received 37% of the premium for not taking the insurance.

Mrs. Markowitz stated that is correct.

The Board approved said reports by a vote of eight ayes, and one abstention (Mr. Morris.)

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 noted two addendums one for support staff and one correction for candidate number 10.

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

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

Mr. Shubin asked Dr. Muenker to explain what it takes to become a long-term substitute in Neshaminy.

Dr. Muenker stated that if one desires a long-term position and has eighty days of consecutive service in that position, then they are entered into a pool and these candidates would be considered first for a long-term position. If there are no candidates within that pool, then the position is up for anyone of interest who has certification in that area.

Mr. Shubin asked if the only candidates that are considered are from the candidate pool list.

Dr. Muenker responded that is correct.

Mr. Shubin asked if the district can go outside to look potentially for other candidates that could be better qualified for a position other than what is in the sub pool.

Dr. Muenker responded that based on the current contractual language that going outside is not an option.

Mr. Morris stated that approximately a half a million dollars is attributed to retiree bonuses.

Dr. Muenker clarified it is much higher than that when taking into account the retirement bonus plus healthcare benefits. Dr. Muenker added that the number of retirees may change because the deadline for notification has not yet been reached. He advised Mr. Morris that he can obtain the figures for him once the report is completed.

Mr. Morris expressed his appreciation for Dr. Muenker's offer.

The Board approved said reports by a vote of seven ayes, and two nays, (Mr. Congdon and Mr. Shubin.)

Motion: 2012 – 2013 Proposed School Calendar

Mr. Morris presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, each year the Board of School Directors must establish an official school calendar for the coming year; and

WHEREAS, the six participating school districts of the Bucks County Technical High School strive to establish a common school calendar; and

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors reviewed the proposed calendar at the March 13, 2012 Public Work Session; and

WHEREAS, the proposed calendar was forwarded for comments to each of the employee bargaining groups.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors adopt the attached school calendar for the 2012 – 13 school year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of School Directors specifically designate Section 1502 holidays: December 24 and 26, 2012; February 18, 2013; and March 28 and 29, 2013 as five official local school district holidays.

Mr. Shubin seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: Approval of the Revised 2011 – 2012 School Calendar

Mr. Shubin presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, due to a work stoppage on January 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18 and 19 which prevented instruction for our K-12 student body; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the Pennsylvania School Code, it is necessary to revise the calendar in order to meet the minimum state child accounting and attendance regulations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors approves the attached revised school calendar which schedules the last day for students in grades Kindergarten through 11 as June 15, 2012, and the last day for teachers as June 25, 2012.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that June 13, 2012 is designated as the date for the Neshaminy High School graduation.

Ms. Boyle seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: Approval of the PSBA Insurance Trust Agreement

Mr. Oettinger presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania School Boards Association Insurance Trust provides a choice of programs for public school entities within the State, including claims management and related services under BUCS Basic; and

WHEREAS, Neshaminy School District, having evaluated the Program's terms, conditions, limitations and exclusions, desires to participate in BUCS Basic; and

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy School District will enter into a program for Managing Unemployment Compensation Claims.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors authorizes the Director of Human Resources to enter into an Agreement with Pennsylvania School Boards Association Insurance Trust with terms and conditions acceptable to the Solicitor and the Director of Human Resources.

Mr. Shubin seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Mr. Webb made a motion for the Board to join the Bucks and Montgomery County School Healthcare Consortium providing that all of the groups hold elections and by a majority vote, approve the consortium before April 3, 2012 and if not approved the district will continue with the existing program.

Mr. Congdon seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Federal Programs

Dr. Muenker advised the Board that there was no update to report on Federal Programs.

Dr. Muenker asked for the Board's consensus on the usage of some of the district's fields on Sundays and there would be no cost to the district. Dr. Muenker stated that the three organizations are Our Lady of Grace track and field for April 1st, 15th, 22nd, and 29th. Guy's Racing Club, Saturday June 23rd, for setup and Sunday, June 24th at the high school site. Prepstar Football, on Sunday, June 24th, at Maple Point to hold a youth football camp geared towards life skills, bullying, and community awareness.

Mr. Webb made a motion that Our Lady of Grace, Guy's Racing Club, and Prepstar Football be permitted the usage of the districts fields on Sundays and all insurance be provided to the district and that the district be named additionally insured and that they pay all costs associated with the use and will be responsible for any damage that the property may receive.

Mr. Sposato seconded the motion.

Mr. Congdon asked if Guy's Racing club would be mountain biking through the property.

Dr. Muenker responded that they have trails.

Mr. Congdon asked if the district would be using any personnel to police the grounds when they are completed.

Dr. Muenker stated that they handle that themselves.

Mr. Oettinger asked if the Bulldog's Baseball Group asked for permission also.

Dr. Muenker responded that he would look into that.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Other Board Business

None

Public Comment

Almando Carrasquillo, Langhorne, retired State Trooper, asked Dr. Muenker to provide a cost analysis report regarding the retirees' benefits at public meetings. In response to a previous comment, Mr. Carrasquillo said it is untrue that the Board allows teachers to be criticized unjustly. He said there is ample evidence that show the results of unprofessional teaching conduct and the lack of effectiveness in teaching the students. Mr. Carrasquillo said he still supports the Board and he hopes the Board is successful in winning the cause for the sake of the students.

Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, retired, suggested doubling the coverage and the amount of the Senior Citizens Rebate Program to include all homeowners and raise the level of income up to \$40 thousand per year and double the rebate. He said this would protect seniors and any others affected by the economy from major increases during hard economic times. Mr. Rodos urged the Board to seek an increase in amusement tax from Sesame Place.

Larry Pastor, Middletown, business executive, noted that a Neshaminy teacher can retire after only 10 years of service and have free healthcare until the age of 65 for themselves and their entire family, plus a substantial bonus. He declared that he is firmly against a tax increase in order to pay for the NFT retro pay, and the NFT healthcare, which has gone up over \$4 million in the last 3 years. He said this has been the solution over the past 20 years and the Neshaminy taxpayer will no longer put up with this. Mr. Pastor said that the taxpayer has gotten no return on their money because the school district is very mediocre and the buildings are antiquated. He stressed that the recession has not created this unfortunate situation, it was caused by the union contracts and the recession has just aggravated it. He urged the Board to stand firm and have no tax increase in 2012.

Charles Alfonso, Langhorne, semi-retired, stated that 67 percent of the Bucks County AP students ranked higher than Neshaminy in standardized tests. He also said that 85 percent of Bucks County AP students ranked higher than Neshaminy in SAT tests, and 69 percent of Bucks County AP students ranked higher than Neshaminy in PSSA tests. Mr. Alfonso said this is a disgrace and failure for the teachers and administration of Neshaminy. Mr. Alfonso also noted that Council Rock North School District showed marked improvement in their ranking over the past few years and they do not have a PSSA test requirement for graduation.

Board Comment

Mr. Congdon asked for clarification regarding the free health benefits of retirees stating that it is his understanding that if a retired teacher gets married and has a family after retirement from Neshaminy, that the dependants would also receive free healthcare. He also said that the Ad Hoc Committee is having ongoing talks and plans for future improvements in the district.

Mr. Webb confirmed that the dependants who are acquired after the retirement of a teacher are still covered under the healthcare benefits.

Mr. Oettinger stated that the next Ad Hoc Committee is scheduled for May 15th at 6:00 p.m. in the Board Room.

Mr. Shubin remarked that the Neshaminy School Board has struggled with a financial situation unlike most districts in the state and with a most contentious labor situation in the history of the state. At the same time, they have been working to maintain critical programs from an educational standpoint; therefore, he finds it very unfair that the Board was accused of evading their responsibility to the educational aspect of their duty. Mr. Shubin said the Board has faced challenging labor agreements, operational cost issues, and building utilization problems and he urged the community to get involved and help the Board make these important decisions.

Mr. Sposato said he finds the suggestion from a commenter to raise taxes is insulting. He stated that the NFT has done nothing to contribute to the education of the students and has only extracted money out of the community. Mr. Sposato said that the taxpayers have served the NFT very well in the last 10 years, and in light of what the taxpayers have put up with, the taxes should not be raised at all for at least 20 years.

Mrs. Markowitz said that part of the benefits is the increasing healthcare costs to all the employee groups and the PSERS retirement to all the employee groups is included.

Mr. Webb noted that even though the employment went down the number of retirees went up and the district is still paying their healthcare plus the healthcare for new employees.

Mr. Koutsouradis said that he thinks that looking into building closures is necessary. He also stated that he does not think that raising taxes is a good idea in this economy. Mr. Koutsouradis remarked that contrary to one suggestion, borrowing money is not advisable, because spending money that you do not have is never a solution to the problem.

Mr. Morris voiced his disapproval of the suggestion to raise taxes. He said this is not the time for a tax increase because the NFT has gorged money from the taxpayers long enough. Mr. Morris said the old CBA is the reason Neshaminy is in the present predicament.

Mr. Webb commented that Act I affects the district's ability to borrow and the state has taken away the reimbursement. Mr. Webb reiterated that the Board is against raising taxes and the philosophy of living within your means stands true.

Adjournment

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 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Burns
Board Secretary