

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
(WORK SESSION/PUBLIC MEETING)
August 23, 2005

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on August 23, 2005, in the Board Room of the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Richard M. Eccles, President
Dr. William H. Spitz, Vice-President
Mrs. Sue C. Barrett
Mrs. June R. Bostwick
Mr. Jason Bowman
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Ms. Carol A. Drioli
Mrs. Kimberly A. Jowett
Mr. Ritchie Webb

ADMINISTRATORS:

Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Dr. Sandra Costanzo
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise
Mrs. Jacqueline Rattigan
Mr. Bruce Wyatt

SECRETARY: Mrs. Anita E. Walls

SOLICITOR:

Thomas J. Profy, IV, Esquire

OTHERS: Approximately 35 persons from the public, staff and press

Prior to the Public Meeting an Executive Session was held by the Board.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Eccles called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

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

Mr. Eccles announced that public comment will take place at the end of the meeting.

3. Update on Poquessing Middle School Renovations

Mr. Paradise updated the Board on the status of the Poquessing Middle School.

- Asbestos abatement work is being completed
- Concrete floor has been sealed with black floor wax
- Boilers were replaced
- New hot water heater system has been installed

Mr. Paradise advised that bids for the remainder of the work will be presented at the October/November board meetings. Bids will include new floor tile, new windows and blinds (awnings will be eliminated), and new cabinet work in every classroom.

Mrs. Cummings noted that there was a misprint in the newspaper stating that the \$5M was for asbestos abatement alone. The entire project was \$5M.

4. Presentation by ATS&R

Dr. Muenker advised that the district felt it would be beneficial to have the architect and construction manager attend the meeting and give the Board and public a scope and sequence presentation in power point to provide an idea of where the district is headed with the high school project.

Dr. Muenker is looking for support from not only the Board, but from the community. Dr. Muenker has a vested interest in seeing that the plan moves forward.

Dr. Muenker introduced Mr. Paul Erickson from ATS&R and Mr. Jeff Merritt from Reynolds Construction Management, Inc.

Mr. Paul Erickson presented a power point presentation which included:

- Schematic design
- Site plans
- Floor plans
- Cost estimates
- Summary

Mr. Erickson provided the following information:

New construction will be 252,000 square feet.
Major renovations will be 170,000 square feet.
Total square footage of the facility will be 422,000 square feet.
Construction dollars:

Total construction costs:	\$62M
Soft costs	\$13
	M
Total Project Costs:	\$75M

Mr. Erickson provided an in depth tour via a power point presentation of each phase of the construction and where each learning and support area would be located. Mr. Erickson assured board members that they have been in consultation with the staff of each department in order to make certain that each department and extra-curricular activity will have adequate space to provide for the ultimate learning experience.

Mrs. Jowett left the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Ms. Drioli would like to see that the options remain available that in the future if it is decided that expansion is required it would not be difficult to add on such space.

Mr. Erickson advised that it has become necessary to provide special education with a section in the science lab area. The state has made requirements that special education be mainstreamed into the entire school. The plans are inclusive of this integration.

Mr. Erickson further noted that three elevators (one existing, two new) will be provided in the facility in order to be ADA compliant.

Mr. Webb noted that there is a concern regarding the rising construction costs and the increase of approximately \$9M. Mr. Erickson noted that some changes have occurred due to program changes, square footage needs, special education needs and management, etc. Mr. Erickson further noted that when changes occur upgrades need to occur in all aspects of the building. Inflation has also played a part in rising construction costs. Asbestos abatement costs have been factored into the figures.

Mr. Erickson advised that 252,000 square feet will be new construction. Sixty percent will be new construction and forty percent will be existing.

Mrs. Barrett expressed concerns with the increase in the construction costs and questioned the reason for these increases. Mrs. Barrett stressed that the community is not able to afford \$75M.

Ms. Drioli stressed that postponing will only further increase costs and the board will not be serving the public.

Mr. Erickson advised that reimbursements from the state could be in the range of 7%-8%.

Mrs. Barrett questioned the site work and the amounts related to same. Mr. Erickson advised that the numbers for site work do not include inflation. As the building expands the site work expands. Township regulations must also be met with regards to the site work.

Dr. Spitz posed questions regarding the add alternates. Mr. Erickson noted that a list has been generated; however, it will be changing as the project goes on. Dr. Spitz is concerned with Gym One and will the work need to be done in the next few years, even if it is not included in the add alternates at this time. Mr. Erickson noted that the area will need attention in the years to come. It is just a matter of when the work should and will take place.

Mr. Bowman left at 8:35 p.m. and returned at 8:38 p.m.

Mrs. Cummings left at 8:35 p.m. and returned at 8:40 p.m.

5. Public Comment

Will take place at the end of the meeting.

6. Announcements

No announcements.

7. Items for Information

8. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Muenker advised that Mr. Wilson was not in attendance due to a family emergency.

9. Committee Reports

a) **Board Policies**

Mr. Bowman advised that there was nothing new at this time.

b) **Educational Development**

Dr. Spitz advised no report.

c) **Finance and Facilities**

Mr. Webb advised no further report.

d) **IU Board**

Mrs. Drioli advised no further report.

e) **Educational Foundation**

Mrs. Cummings advised no report.

f) **Technical School**

Dr. Spitz advised that there are issues that need to be addressed at the next Work Session.

g) **Technology**

Mrs. Jowett was not present.

10. Future Topics

Ms. Drioli advised that an ADA ramp is needed at the swimming pool at the Poquessing facility which requires a 100 foot easement from the school district to the township. Ms. Drioli is looking for consensus from the board to prepare an easement agreement drawn up by the school district solicitor. Lower Southampton Township would be responsible for the ramp and the school district would need to be indemnified.

Mr. Profy recommended that the Township submit a plan to the district and have the Facilities Committee review the plan. Ms. Drioli requested the matter be placed on the next Work Session agenda.

11. Agenda Development for the August 23, 2005 Public Meeting

12. Other Board Business

13. Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. Webb moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Bowman seconded the motion. The Board approved the motion with eight ayes. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Mrs. Bostwick left at 8:45 p.m.

PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

Mr. Eccles called the meeting to order at 8:50 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Upon motion of Ms. Drioli and seconded by Mr. Bowman, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the June 21st and August 2nd Public Meetings.

Approval of Treasurer's Report, Bills for Payment, Investments, and Exonerations of Personal and Per Capita Tax –

Mr. Paradise presented the following for approval:

June, 2005 and July, 2005 Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit
Check Register – June, 2005 and July, 2005
Escrow Funds, Capital Improvement Funds, Investment Funds

Ms. Drioli moved the June, 2005 and July, 2005 Treasurer's Reports be approved, subject to audit, and the June, 2005 and the July, 2005 bills for payment, Escrow Funds, Capital Project Funds, Investments Funds. Mr. Bowman seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit, bills for payment, investments, escrow funds, capital project funds, budget transfer report and personal and per capita tax exonerations.

Certified and Support Personnel Actions

Dr. Muenker presented the following for approval:

Elections of Certified Personnel
Resignations/Leaves of Certified Personnel
Elections of Support Personnel
Resignations/Leaves of Support Personnel
Sabbatical Leaves of Certified Personnel
Extra-Curricular Staff and Salaries Report

Dr. Muenker requested approval of the personnel report and Extra-Curricular staff and salaries report as presented.

Dr. Spitz moved the personnel report be accepted. Mr. Webb seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the personnel report. Mrs. Jowett and Mrs. Bostwick were not present.

Federal Programs

Dr. Muenker advised that there was nothing to report.

Public Comment

Mr. Solis Basen, Langhorne, PA stated that he was sorry that the representatives from the architect and construction company left. Mr. Basen stated to the board to slow down and read the fine print. The figures have gone from \$55M to \$75M. Mr. Basen feels the public is being flim/flamed and low balled. The price that was quoted is not the price that is being gotten. There is not enough input by the Board members. The Finance Committee comes up with figures. Mr. Basen would like to hear from the other Board members. Mr. Basen reiterated to read the small and fine print and exam the documents. Please review the proposals and check the original figures.

Mrs. Martha Lindner, Langhorne, PA, stated that the architects were told to leave. People who have reaction will not have the opportunity for the architects to hear their opinions. Mrs. Lindner stated that an election took place and out of the 26 polling places, 23 polling places said "No" to a new high school and only 3 said "Yes." Mrs. Lindner stated that things are being slipped in to create a higher cost. Mrs. Lindner stated that in the Courier Times it stated a renovation for \$65M or a new school for \$98.6M. Mrs. Lindner believes that is what people voted for. Mrs. Lindner feels they can still get same. Mrs. Lindner stated that three different architects have told us that we can get that. Mrs. Lindner was looking at a document submitted to the Board for \$66M. The plans need to be reviewed and everything that is not necessary needs to be eliminated. Mrs. Lindner noted that a whole new addition has been submitted for Gym 3, including a climbing wall. Mrs. Lindner stated we need to make cuts. How many Board members have obtained a copy of the plans and taken a good look. Mrs. Lindner noted that what is being done is not acceptable.

Mr. William O'Connor, Langhorne, PA noted that there are two groups of thought. One group is looking at the cost of the project as presented, considering the impact of two years of delay in closing a middle school, and then there are others saying what happened to the \$35M to \$60M reconstruction plans as promised. This is the plan that is now in front of us. Mr. O'Connor encourages everyone on both sides not to react to the dollars, not to react to campaign promises of the past, but try to understand the plan. Mr. O'Connor noted that there will be an Act 34 hearing process. As the plan is refined, please provide any cuts that are acceptable, however, please provide maintenance now, and do not defer. Mr. O'Connor noted that the architect is here at the pleasure of the Board and is doing what they are directed to do. Mr. O'Connor noted that the \$60M renovation plan was undersized. Again, we need to look at where we are now and react to this plan. Mr. O'Connor noted that Mrs. Lindner has studied the plan, and in the past it was stated that same would not be available to after a public meeting. Mr. O'Connor did not know why he was also not able to receive those same plans.

Mr. Joseph Blasch, Feasterville, PA, appreciated the question of Mr. Webb as to why the costs have gone from \$66M to \$75M. Mr. Blasch implored the Board to take a close look at the presentation, because seniors are hurting. Mr. Blasch would appreciate the presentation being looked at very closely.

Mr. Sy Goldstein, Langhorne, PA, commented regarding the 150 square feet per student. Mr. Goldstein noted that he never had that when he went to high school and 90% of the students went on to high school. The square footage is not important, but what is learned. Mr. Goldstein questioned whether all the number of classrooms is needed. Are all the labs necessary? Eight baseball fields necessary? Rock climbing wall? Is every amenity needed?

Mr. Frank Koziol, Levittown, PA, noted that the architects and engineers have spoken with the staff and administration, however, the Board needs to take into consideration what the people are expecting and what the budget can withstand. Mr. Koziol noted an \$8M increase in five months, about an 11% increase. Mr. Koziol noted

something occurred. Either the price was low balled, a mistake was made, or the scope of the project has been changed. Square footage needs to be multiplied by cost.

Mr. Howard Lindner, Langhorne, PA, stated that he is very disappointed, being the campaign chairman for Mr. Eccles, and having the school president not attempting not to let people speak. Mr. Lindner noted that the people here have a right to ask questions to the architect. Their money is going to pay the bill. Mr. Lindner feels a disservice has been done to the public. Mr. Lindner feels there is only one side. The side of the people who voted. They voted for \$66M. That was on the literature. When knocking on doors the statement is "I can't afford to live here too much longer." The people want quality and a good education, but they want a price tag. Mr. Lindner took his wife on a cruise for her 65th birthday and got a suite, everything the best. When I travel other times, I don't get the best, but I have just as good of a time. Mr. Lindner noted the quality of education is what is important. Watch out for the taxpayer. Mr. Lindner stressed that we cannot lose focus. Mr. Lindner knows the waste that goes on in a school district. Mr. Lindner noted that mandated classes the district can do nothing about. Scheduling has a lot to do with the space required. Lunches have always been an issue. Mr. Lindner stated that a citizen's group should be formed. Builders, administrators, school teachers, maintenance, etc. If you go to the teachers, they are going to want more, not less. The teacher is the key to a good education, not the facility. Mr. Lindner spoke of areas of the building that are only used by specific students. Waste needs to be controlled. Office size needs to be considered. A quality build can be had and still take care of the neighbors.

Mrs. Marianne O'Connor, Langhorne, PA, noted that some people may be disappointed with what the costs are. Mrs. O'Connor noted that the public did not vote on a cost. Mrs. O'Connor noted that when you open up an old building you do not know what you are going to find. The warning was made. Even the independent architect had the cost of the project in the upper \$70's. Costs have gone up greatly since last October. Mrs. O'Connor is paying double for many of her bills. Mrs. O'Connor noted that if there is something that is frivolous, then it should be cut. The Board has worked extremely hard and they have been elected to represent us. Mrs. O'Connor thanked the Board. Mrs. O'Connor feels the architects and engineers have done the right thing and they have spoken with the staff who will utilize the building. The public needs to know that this is the year 2005 and what may have been good years ago, but times have changed. State mandates need to be met. Space is not being wasted. There needs to be a stop to the Board being attacked by the community.

Mr. Alden Thorpe, Levittown, PA, stated that he is a committee person from Lower 7 and \$66M is the figure that was put out and that is the figure that most people voted for. Mr. Thorpe feels bad that the architect could not stay and answer questions for the public. Mr. Thorpe questions who is watching the store. Mr. Thorpe would like the Board to answer questions regarding the addition of square footage. The Board needs to answer the questions of why these additions are being made. Mr. Thorpe expects the Board to have the answers. Mr. Thorpe would like a presentation from the Board and not the architects. Mr. Thorpe's character is being attacked because he told many people the figure would be \$66M, and now the Board needs to make a presentation as to why the costs are rising.

Mr. Phil Schieber, Langhorne, PA, stated that it is time to get realistic. Taxes are going up all around us. County taxes, state taxes, food taxes, gasoline tax, etc. People who continue to work for a living probably see their salaries going up. However, most elderly are living on a fixed income. Reality needs to be faced. The Board was elected to represent all the people. Mr. Schieber stated that he loves children and every child is entitled to a fine education, however, it needs to go back to a basic education. Prices need to be cut. The community cannot afford this!

Board Comment

Mrs. Barrett stated earlier that she was upset since she was counting on \$66M. This was the basis for her hiring the architect. The price has gone up \$9M and it is very upsetting. Renovations have gone up. There is a discrepancy with square foot prices. The site work was \$2.4M and now it is \$5.7M. Mrs. Barrett would like the Board to seek solutions. The Board needs to look at options. Mrs. Barrett is not convinced, and she needs to be convinced.

Mr. Webb noted that the Board needs time to review the plan in detail. Misinformation has been given. It was \$55M construction costs and it is now \$62M construction costs. The Board approved for borrowing of \$70M based on ATS&R projections. Construction costs are up \$7M. The overall project is \$5M. Mr. Webb noted that the architect was not told to leave. The Board took a break and the architect left. Mr. Webb noted that Mr. Wilson is not here this

evening and he has the expertise to tell us what cuts can be made and what cuts cannot. Mr. Webb noted that political promises were not made that the building could be constructed for \$65M. Mr. Mowry, Basco and ATS&R stated that figure.

Mr. Webb defended Mr. Eccles and noted that he does allow people to speak. The Board agrees that people are hurting. The Board relies on the experts. Prices have increased. Mr. Webb wanted the construction manager to explain the multi-prime bidding and how that will save the district money. The prices are not written in stone. They are estimates.

Mr. Webb left at 9:40 p.m. and returned at 9:44 p.m.

Ms. Drioli questioned which costs would give the district the best reimbursements from the state. Ms. Drioli stated that an 8% rate of inflation has been put into this project. The project needs to move forward. The rate of inflation and cost of construction is going up and the project will continue to cost more and more. Some of the increases will net the district more in reimbursements. Ms. Drioli stated that there needs to be a certain quality of air, light and space in each classroom.

Dr. Muenker stated that there is a sound rationale for the number of classrooms that have been proposed in this plan. Every period of the day is accounted for. The architects have reviewed all the statistics with the staff and administration to come up with the square footage needed. Standards need to be met in order to make the classroom reimbursable. Formulas are in place to obtain the reimbursements. State mandates are constantly changing. Districts need to abide by certain minimum requirements. Limitations should be considered, however, educated decisions need to be made.

Dr. Muenker noted that the Act 34 hearing will be the time for the public forum to have challenges and questions. Dr. Muenker would like to have a sound project and move forward. Dr. Muenker would like to answer any further questions the public may have.

Dr. Spitz echoed what Ms. Drioli said. The more we slow down the more the project will cost. Dr. Spitz believes that the Board has examined the plans and has looked at the details. The construction manager was hired by the district to help with this task. They are going over the plans and finding areas where savings can be made.

Dr. Spitz urged the community to keep in mind that the cost of the building in terms of the taxes represents about 3% of the budget for the district every year. Costs of salaries and benefits encompasses 75% of the budget. Costs must be kept in perspective. Dr. Spitz feels that it is unfortunate that people in the community have turned the numbers around for whatever reasons. Irresponsible comments have been made within the community for political reasons. The costs heard this evening are real numbers. Dr. Spitz would like to see if the numbers can be lower. The project needs to get done or it will cost the district more.

Adjournment

Mr. Webb moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Bowman seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 9:55 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls
Board Secretary