

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

January 22, 2008

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on January 22, 2008, in the Board Room of the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Mr. Richard M. Eccles, President  
Mr. Frank Koziol, Vice President  
Mr. Joseph R. Blasch  
Ms. Irene Boyle  
Mrs. Susan Cummings  
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis  
Mr. William D. O'Connor  
Dr. William H. Spitz  
Mr. Ritchie Webb

**ADMINISTRATORS:**

Mr. Paul J. Kadri  
Dr. Louis T. Muenker  
Dr. Sandra Costanzo  
Dr. Geeta A. Heble  
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise  
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan

**SECRETARY:**

Mrs. Anita E. Walls

**SOLICITOR:**

Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

**OTHERS:** Approximately 45 persons from the public, staff and press

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Mr. Eccles advised that an Executive Session took place prior to the meeting regarding personnel issues.

**Call to Order**

Mr. Eccles called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

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

**Announcements**

None.

**Public Comment**

Mr. Howard Lindner, Langhorne, PA, wished to address unnecessary positions. Lead teacher positions came into existence. Mr. Lindner feels that these positions are a waste of money. Why are there department chairmen and lead teachers at the same time? Many people from other districts cannot believe that Neshaminy has both. The Department Chairman position is historical. Lead Teachers teach a couple of periods, off for the rest of the day and receive \$3,000 extra. What qualifications are necessary for a lead teacher? Are they some type of Administrator? Why were these positions started? Neshaminy is paying for Lead teachers and giving them \$3,000 more. Why are there Department Chairmen and Lead Teachers? How are they selected? Mr. Lindner feels that Neshaminy should not have both. Mr. Lindner favors Department Chairmen. Mr. Lindner would like the Board to look into this. Mr. Lindner questioned the Assistant Superintendent position and what occurred when Mr. Wyatt retired. Why hire another person? Some place cuts must occur. Taxpayers must save money.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, urged that before viable schools are closed please think about the following. Neshaminy School District has the opportunity to be in the fore front of education in Pennsylvania for the next decade. Neshaminy possesses a commodity which few districts have. This

commodity is available classroom space. Rather than shut it down, use it. The district must become a destination, rather than a stop over on a way to a perceived better district. Both Pennsbury and Council Rock have no available space. We have under utilized space. Frankly, no one should want to close a neighborhood elementary school. A closed neighborhood school becomes an eyesore and adversely affects real estate values. Closed and/or abandoned schools shout out this is a neighborhood in decline. A closed school in the middle of a neighborhood is like a cancer. It will ultimately destroy the neighborhood. Mr. Rodos would like to fill the schools with students. Mr. Rodos believes that special education should be explored further, especially the classes that the district pays for students to attend elsewhere, and the full day kindergarten program. Morrisville School District is in bad shape and perhaps Neshaminy could educate their elementary students at a price that would be profitable for Neshaminy. Mr. Rodos believes that the school district should explore ways to reduce the real estate tax on those households who can not afford further tax increases. Perhaps a uniform credit upon the same class of subjects might be in keeping with the Pennsylvania Constitution and would provide relief to those individuals who earn less than a certain sum inclusive of pensions and other non taxable PA income.

### **Student Representative Report**

Mr. Matt Miller provided the following student representative report:

- Laughing Stock took place this weekend and it was a great success
- Playwickian received a PBEA Gold Medal Award for Excellent writing in literature
- Drama Show – January 28-Feb 1 at 7:00 p.m.
- Gym Night practices are starting and will be held at Ferderbar, Neshaminy High School, and Hoover
- FBLA had 15 first place students that are going to States
- Construction at high school is getting good feedback

### **Superintendent's Report**

#### **McKissick Report, Presentation on Consolidation of Facilities**

#### **Discussion of Modular Classrooms**

#### **High School Guidance Plan Update**

Mr. Kadri presented to the Board the Guidance Counselor Plan update for the high school:

- Where are we? Where would we like to go? Why is this important? What will be expected changes? What is necessary to move forward?
- Student to Guidance Counselor ratio is 325 students to 1 guidance counselor. The national average is 250 students to 1 counselor. Neshaminy is over by 75 students.
- Guidance counselors are unavailable to meet with each student face to face.
- Most counselors service the college application process/college preparation.
- Guidance counselors should have the time to work with families.
- Large high school has many benefits and opportunities; however, it can feel impersonal.
- More personal contact with guidance counselors can benefit students/families.
- Social challenges are ever increasing: Gangs, drugs, alcohol, etc.
- Global economy presenting more of a challenge to students.
- Concrete four year plan for students and families needs to be developed during high school years.
- More student contact with Guidance Counselors (at least 2 times during the year).

Mr. Kadri noted that investments need to be made in the Guidance Counselor areas. Mr. Kadri would like to look at different models to see which would best fit the Neshaminy District. Mr. Kadri would like to finalize a plan for the Board so they could see what the program would consist of, materials used, student transition plan and monies needed for three new guidance counselors. The High School would then go from 7 counselors to 10 counselors which would make a ratio of 225 students per 1 guidance counselor. When ninth grade transitions to the high school, 2 new counselors would come on board and the ratio would be about 240 students to 1 guidance counselor.

Mr. O'Connor urged Mr. Kadri to get the extra counselors up and going as soon as possible. Students only see counselors when something is incredibly wrong. Many students never have any contact with their high school counselors.

Mr. Kadri wants to make sure that the district will be using the best model available and get the most for the money being spent.

Mr. Webb questioned how 3 full time counselors will be hired for the amount of \$150,000 which is set aside. Can we take economics and resift funds. Mr. Webb will support same as long as it can be paid for someplace.

Dr. Spitz inquired whether the guidance counselors have given their input regarding the situation and can an assessment be made after a year or so to measure success. Mr. Kadri advised that the most tangible benefit will be that students will be able to meet with the counselors at least 2 times per year.

Mr. Blasch feels that this can only help the high school program.

Mr. Eccles questioned where the two guidance counselors will come from at the middle school level without short changing the middle school students.

Mr. Koziol agrees that as much service as possible needs to be given to the students, however, if 325 students are assigned per counselor and if there are only 100 days per school year that would mean that each counselor would only need to see three students per day. Look at the present counselor and make sure they are covering their duties. Mr. Kadri noted that counselors are dealing with emotional triage (50% of the day) and other duties.

The Board provided consensus for Mr. Kadri to head forward to look at the financial aspect, work load aspect, and what exactly would same look like upon completion.

Mr. Kadri advised that he would need to leave the meeting at this time due to family illness. Dr. Muenker would continue as Assistant Superintendent.

### **Modulars**

Mr. Paradise advised that each of the schools with modulars were visited last week and plans were reviewed to modify the program and in conclusion it was determined that 16 of the 22 modulars can be removed in September, 2008. Oliver Heckman Elementary may need to maintain 3 of the 6 which exist at that site. The principal would only use three of the six that will remain at that site. Initial one time cost would be involved for removal/demolition of same.

Mr. Paradise advised that removal is necessary because excess space is available without them, in excess of 20 years old and purchased in the mid-80's for a few years to deal with an enrollment bulge, future cost avoidance in heating, lighting, etc. Over the next few years repairs would become necessary. PDE considers modulars substandard instructional space or classroom space. Security is a problem with the modulars being outside the envelope. This will bring students back into the building for instruction.

Mr. Profy advised that only a consensus to close same will be necessary.

There was Board consensus for the modulars to be closed.

### **McKissick Report – Presentation on Consolidation of Facilities**

Mr. Vern McKissick provided to Board members with Phase III of the study process. This is a facilities upgrade study. Not viewed as a building closure study, however, it becomes an aspect of future planning. Mr. McKissick will review the option again with the Board. They have been refined and no new options are included. The materials on the screen have been distributed to Board members.

Mr. McKissick advised that the goal of Phase III was to refine selected Options 2, 4, 9, 10 & 11. Full Time kindergarten will be included in all capacity calculations. The maintenance wing of Eisenhower School will be used for the alternative education program consistently in all options. Modular classrooms have been taken offline.

Board members viewed the Power Point presentation.

Mr. McKissick explained that the Board at this point will review same and possibly come to the conclusion of one option that could then be looked at in terms of an implementation schedule, etc. Further transportation discussions could then take place and redistricting issues.

Mr. Profy advised that the Code provides a blueprint that is firm. The Board needs to agree upon by appropriate Board action the designation of a school or schools for which you would have a legal advertisement for the holding of a public hearing. The advertisement has to be legally published not less than 15 days before the hearing date. The hearing date has to be at least 90 days before the Board takes action on the closure or non closure of the school or schools for which the hearing has been held. There are notice requirements to the Department of Education and also could be the requirement that you would notify the effected Collective Bargaining Units and also employees in the buildings which face the prospect of a closure. There needs to be formal Board action. These are all Section 508 actions which require five affirmative votes of the total Board. Mr. Profy advised that the initial action is to publish a legal notice that the Board is considering same and then hold the public hearing. The Code requires that there be an elapse of 90 days from the date of hearing to the Board action. A specific school needs to be designated.

Mr. Webb suggested since time is of the essence a special meeting needs to be scheduled to narrow down which specific school or schools will be recommended. Based upon what Mr. Profy has stated sometime in February the process would need to be commenced. By February a specific building or buildings would need to be identified or the advertisement is defective.

A special meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, January 30, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. to be held at the Maple Point Middle School Board Room with McKissick Associates being in attendance. Said meeting would be advertised and open to the public. The Administration at that time would also have a recommendation regarding same.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Mrs. Walls presented the minutes of the November 27, 2007 and December 3, 2007 public meetings. Upon motion of Mr. Blasch and seconded by Mr. O'Connor the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the November 27, 2007 and December 3, 2007 Public Meetings.

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

Mr. Paradise presented the following for approval:

- November, 2007 and December, 2007 Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit
- Check Register – November, 2007 and December, 2007
- Investment Summary
- Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations – November, 2007 and December, 2007

Mr. Webb moved the November, 2007 and December, 2007 treasurer's report, subject to audit, check register, investments, and exonerations of personal and per capita tax be approved. Mr. Blasch seconded the motion.

Mr. Koziol questioned checks to Scott's All Seasons and were quotes received. Ms. Boyle inquired regarding Teen Parenting/Child Home Community. Mr. Paradise advised that these funds were grant monies and the

company is being providing same for their services. Mr. Koziol also questioned the transportation subsidies received from the state of PA.

The Board unanimously approved the Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit, check registers, investments and personal and per capita tax exonerations.

**Bids/Budget Transfers:**

Information distributed prior to the meeting. Mr. Paradise presented the following bid for Board approval:

**Bid No. 09-10 Caps and Gowns**

Bid Amount: \$28,596.25

The Bid is for caps and gowns for the graduating classes of 2008, 2009, 2010.

The Board unanimously approved Bid No. 09-10 and Budget Transfer Report No. 08-2 (Working Copy).

**Certified and Support Personnel Reports**

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

Dr. Muenker recommended the approval of the personnel report for certified and support personnel. Dr. Muenker advised that more names will be coming forth with retirements in the next couple months.

Mr. Blasch moved the certified and support personnel reports be accepted. Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the certified and support personnel reports.

**Motion: Appointment of Individuals to the Bucks County Technical School Authority**

Mr. Blasch presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the term of certain members serving on the Bucks County Technical School Authority on behalf of the Neshaminy School District have expired; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to appoint individuals to fill these vacancies.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the following individuals are appointed to the Authority as indicated below:

Bucks County Technical School Authority for a Five-Year Term:

Michael Binder to 1/6/2013

Rita Geddes to 1/6/2013

Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

**Motion: School Director Recognition Month**

Ms. Boyle presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the role of locally elected school officials has served the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and local communities meeting the needs of public education since the passage of the Free School Act in 1834; and

WHEREAS, these local boards have discharged their responsibilities to public education in a manner which has placed public education in the forefront of our educational systems; and

WHEREAS, locally elected officials have distinguished themselves and their communities in this non paid, volunteer public service commitment; and

WHEREAS, the contributions of these men and women should be recognized and appreciated by those who benefit from the workings of our public school system.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors hereby proclaims the month of January as School Director Recognition Month.

Dr. Spitz seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

Dr. Muenker honored School Board members with Certificates.

**Motion: Adoption of the 2008-09 Preliminary Budget**

Mr. Eccles presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, in accordance with Act 1 of 2006, the Board of School Directors has received a Proposed Preliminary Budget for the 2008-09 fiscal year; and

WHEREAS, the Proposed Preliminary Budget was made available for public inspection on form PDE-2028 effective December 21, 2007; and

WHEREAS, in order to further comply with Act 1, the Preliminary Budget must be adopted by the Board of School Directors on or before January 23, 2008; and

WHEREAS, Act 1 further provides for "referendum exceptions", which must be submitted to and approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education on or before February 7, 2008.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the 2008-2009 Preliminary Budget is adopted in accordance with Act 1 of 2006 and it shall be made available for public inspection as required by law.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the School District shall apply to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for exceptions specified under Act 1 as per the attached Summary.

Mr. Blasch seconded the motion.

Mr. Koziol wished to amend the above motion to take out the last paragraph regarding applying to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for exceptions specified under Act 1.

Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion.

Dr. Spitz agrees with the intent, however, legally are there issues if the Board agrees to this. Mr. O'Connor stated that the Board could agree separately that they would agree to maintain under the amount without physically making a motion to amend. Mr. O'Connor would not like to legally eliminate any options available since it is so early in the budget process.

Mr. Koziol will not vote for same in the present state.

Mr. Paradise advised that he does not have enough time to cut specific items without Board input by tomorrow, January 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Mr. Eccles stated that maybe the Board can agree and make clear to the Administration that they do not want to exceed the 4.4%.

Mr. Profy stated that the Preliminary Budget as prepared with the exceptions contained be approved and subsequent to that the Board make a motion that it is the intent of the Board as the budget process evolves strive to reach the point that the final budget of the school district would be predicated upon no more than the allowed without exceptions. The law requires that the Preliminary Budget not only be adopted but you also have to within five days submit same to the Department of Education.

Mr. Profy advised that the motion on the floor at present is Mr. Koziol's motion to amend. That amended motion would need to fail in order to proceed as Mr. Profy has outlined. The Board would then adopt the Preliminary Budget as presented which includes the exceptions and then a third motion would express the intent of the Board that as the Budget process proceeds further that it would be the objective and intent of the Board that the final budget which would not require exceptions.

Mr. Eccles requested a roll call vote on the motion to amend the motion to remove the last paragraph. The roll call tally indicated that the motion failed by a vote of eight nays (Mr. Blasch, Ms. Boyle, Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Eccles, Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. O'Connor, Dr. Spitz and Mr. Webb) and one aye (Mr. Koziol).

Mr. Eccles requested a roll call vote on the original motion. The roll call tally indicated that the motion passed by a vote of seven ayes (Mr. Blasch, Ms. Boyle, Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Eccles, Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. O'Connor, Dr. Spitz) and two nays (Mr. Koziol and Mr. Webb).

Mr. Koziol made a motion that the Board pursues the goal of not exceeding a milage increase of 4.4% and makes every attempt not to use any exceptions that are granted unto the District under the laws of State of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Spitz seconded the motion.

Mr. Profy clarified that this is an expression of the Board's intent going forward as part of the budget adoption process.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

### **Federal Programs**

Dr. Muenker advised that two new grants were received. Federal programs to date total over \$3M. Credit should be given to Dr. Costanzo and her department.

### **Other Board Business**

Mr. O'Connor wished to find out whether the Tech Ed classes at the High School are redundant, and therefore, resulting in duplication of what is happening at the Bucks County Tech School and hence increasing expenses for our budget. No one is questioning the need for a tech ed program, just want to get to the bottom line as to whether said program is redundant.

Board discussion ensued regarding what other districts offer and at what costs to the Districts.

Mr. Koziol requested a five year budgeting outlook. Mr. Paradise advised that he has such a document and would like to present same at the next Facilities/Finance meeting.

Mr. Koziol requested that the full day kindergarten costs be gotten and made known to the Board.

Mr. Webb requested that the cost per student also be presented as per Mr. Basen's request.

Mr. Koziol inquired whether the busing could be contracted out of District and if a study could be completed. Mr. Paradise advised that the present Collective Bargaining Agreement prevents such a study from taking place. Said contract is up next year.

### **Public Comment**

Mr. Marv Dickler, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that yes the counselors are very important; however, it must be found within the budget to be able to afford same. Mr. Paradise is very conservative; some items need to be addressed such as the large amount of retirees. What will replacement costs be? There is a rather good savings which may result. Mr. Dickler feels that there are many other areas that with sharp pencils it can reduce without hurting the students. There are holes in the boat. Let's give the students the best possible education, but stop the waste of money.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that there are three areas of income that were in last year's budget which are not included in this year's budget which totals \$3.5M:

- Revenue from intermediate sources
- Accountability grants
- Federal restricted grants and aide

Mr. Rodos feels that this can be explained. Mr. Rodos is also concerned about the number of staff. Call Caroline Gallow, Kindergarten Specialist, Office of Child Development and Early Learning, PA Department of Education, she will tell you that it is not illegal to charge for full day kindergarten.

Mr. Paradise responded that the district does not know the number of employee retirements. Employees have until April 1<sup>st</sup> to tell the district when they will retire. The District cannot anticipate any numbers at this time. Mr. Paradise further advised that there are no federal revenues or expenditures in the budget to date. They equal each other. At this point it is not provided for. The accountability grants fall into the same category.

### **Board Comment**

Mr. O'Connor noted that it is an antiquated system of tax collection. This past week debates were taking place in Harrisburg regarding tax collection. Many resemble Act 1 and Act 72. Discussions will take place next Monday. Mr. O'Connor encourages everyone to contact the State Representative Chris King and find out what he is supporting and the various options available.

Mr. Eccles stated that the Board took a great step in trying to control costs and mandate the Administration to look at ways to control same. The Board has shown great courage in stepping up and we don't agree with Act 1, we don't want the exceptions and we want to get a budget that is realistic to the taxpayers and also maintain the integrity of our students and learning facilities.

### **Adjournment of Meeting**

Mr. O'Connor moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Webb seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 9:40 p.m.



Public Meeting of the Neshaminy Board of School Directors (cont.)  
January 22, 2008

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Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls  
Board Secretary