

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

October 23, 2007

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on October 23, 2007, in the Board Room of the Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Richard M. Eccles, President  
Mrs. Sue C. Barrett, Vice President  
Mr. Joseph R. Blasch  
Ms. Irene Boyle  
Mr. Jason Bowman  
Mrs. Susan Cummings  
Mr. Frank J. Koziol  
Dr. William H. Spitz  
Mr. Ritchie Webb

ADMINISTRATORS:

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

SECRETARY:

Mrs. Anita E. Walls

SOLICITOR:

Thomas Profy, III, Esquire

OTHERS: Approximately 60 persons from the public, staff and press

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Call to Order

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

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Announcements

No announcements.

Public Comment

Mrs. Lisa Reiser, Langhorne, PA, stated that she is a taxpayer and resident of Langhorne for almost 15 years. Mrs. Reiser has four children in Neshaminy School District. Mrs. Reiser is the President of the PTO at Oliver Heckman and she is looking forward to reporting the highlights and details of tonight's meeting back to the parents and staff at the PTO meetings scheduled for tomorrow and Thursday. As a fellow volunteer in a position of leadership Mrs. Reiser understands and appreciates all the time, hard work and commitment required to do a job well. Mrs. Reiser thanked the Board for their efforts. Mrs. Reiser commented on her experiences with Mr. Kadri and his work in the district. Mrs. Reiser thanked Mr. Kadri for making himself available to her as a parent and PTO leader. His attendance at the PTO meetings both at the school and district level, as well as attendance at numerous school events, is an affirmation of the value the district places from the highest level on the involvement and hard work that is taking place throughout the district is our parent volunteer groups. This is a partnership and all the time and energy spent is a worthwhile and necessary investment. Everyone is thankful to have this alliance. Mrs. Reiser appreciates the recent trainings Mr. Kadri has provided directly to PTO leaders to get the school PTO websites up and running. This is a tremendous resource in this age of technology and it is good to have the schools caught up with this type of technology.

Mrs. Reiser believes that Mr. Kadri is a visionary and will enable great things to happen in the district given the necessary resources and staff. He is conducting the research which will eliminate the strength and short comings within the district and will provide information for the district to make decisions which are sound, well thought out and of long term benefit. He understands the needs of our schools in the context of the district and broader community. He is working hard to demonstrate student progress and provide educational opportunities which are competitive with neighboring districts. Top quality schools contribute to top quality communities and are of ultimate benefit to everyone. In addition, Mr. Kadri has strived to practice fiscal responsibility while continuing to raise the bar. Thank you, Mr. Kadri. Keep up the fantastic job.

Mrs. Reiser stated that with regard to a school board level personnel committee this is getting out of hand. How many people does it take to hire a teacher in the Neshaminy School District? Who gets to decide which community members will participate on the committee? Personnel decisions need to be left in the hands of the people who are best qualified and not fueled by those looking only at cutting expenses and saving money or to show favoritism. Mrs. Reiser commented regarding the last board meeting that we are living in a time and culture when we are all overbooked. Time is precious. Mrs. Reiser is investing this night for a greater cause. It is vital that these meetings are productive and well run. Too many times at the October 9<sup>th</sup> meeting comments were made and issues would remain unresolved. Clear goals and specific timelines for achieving such goals need to be put into place. Everyone is aware of the upcoming election. Important work needs to happen now. It is unfair to waste the time of the Neshaminy voters and tarnish the reputation of the Neshaminy School District by using this forum to further one's own political agenda. As PTO president Mrs. Reiser invited any interested community or board members to contact her to get a parent prospective of some of the great things happening at Oliver Heckman. The decisions made at these Board meetings are of great impact to the children, education and futures. Let's try to remember to keep them in the picture. The work of the Board and Administration and the participation of the community can not and should not be narrowed down to such specific issues that the discussion of these issues becomes detrimental to the process and progress of the district and the board. As noted in the vision statement on the Neshaminy website, everyone needs to be looking at issues through the same lenses and aligning our actions to fulfill our common purpose. That is our only hope of realizing our mission which states: "The Neshaminy community empowers students to become productive citizens and life long learners. We build futures."

Mrs. Marianne O'Connor, Langhorne, PA stated that the behavior of some of the Board members at the last meeting was outrageous to say the least. Mrs. O'Connor stated that Mr. Webb implied that the Superintendent and Director of Human Resources is letting politics into the district. Who you know hiring play a part within who is hired in the district. Mrs. O'Connor stated that Mr. Webb came across as being political at that meeting as well as in past meetings. Mrs. O'Connor stated that Mr. Webb also made accusations in June, 2006 that this same Administration was not giving a certain individual enough consideration for an Administrative position. Mrs. O'Connor is concerned that Mr. Webb did not have a problem with the whole process, not just the appointment of one individual. Mrs. O'Connor was concerned with the comments at the previous meeting directed to Mr. Kadri and Dr. Muenker. Mrs. O'Connor would like to have accusations backed up with proof, and if that cannot be done accusations should not be made. If Mr. Webb feels that those in the position of doing the hiring are not conducting themselves as they should then that is what should be addressed. Again, Mr. Webb is the one sounding political. By actions such as Mr. Webb's, as well as many others of this board two weeks ago, that reinforces why there should not be a personnel committee. Mrs. O'Connor stated that her daughter is a substitute teacher in Neshaminy School District and probably my husband will be serving on this Board in December. All the more reason that politics stay out of the district. If not a family relation, many have political relations within the district. This is all the more reason why the Board should have no influence as to who is hired. Ms. Boyle noted that Mr. Kadri is providing information on how candidates are narrowed down. What is the real problem? Let those who are in the position do the job they were hired to do. If any Board members feel they want to be in the position, then Mrs. O'Connor suggests that they resign from the Board and apply for a Director of Human Resources position or perhaps a Superintendent of Schools position. That is if you have the qualifications to hold either of those positions.

Mrs. Esther Mikus, Langhorne, PA, commented that the condition of the high school during the back to school night was deplorable. Mrs. Mikus is aware that construction is under way but her son's 11<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms were dirty and disgusting and Mrs. Mikus finds it incomprehensible that the students must be in a filthy environment every day. Mrs. Mikus and her husband watched the last meeting on T.V. School Board meetings are not the proper forum for the political grandstanding that took place. Further, one member of the board seems to be concerned for the taxpayers. Being a taxpayer myself this concern is too little and too late. Lastly, the Board hired Mr. Kadri to do a job. Mrs. Mikus believes that he should be allowed to do the job and the personnel committee and board politics undermine him.

Mrs. Cheryl Brodbeck, Langhorne, PA, stated that she has two children, one of which will be attending kindergarten in September, 2008. Mrs. Brodbeck stated that she heard Mr. Kadri speak at Heckman as well as at the high school. Both times Mr. Kadri stated that he would like to spend a little more now and get a higher return later. Mrs. Brodbeck agrees 100%. That is why Rendell would like to sell full day kindergarten and pre-K programs in all districts of PA. The report from the PA Department of Education states to invest now or pay more later. If Neshaminy begins full day kindergarten and Pre-K at Tawanka it will be giving students a better start in their early years. For every dollar invested in pre-school programs the return is \$1.68. This will help increase in earnings for school graduates and savings on public assistance and corrections. Every book and study Mrs. Brodbeck has read there is one thing that is consistent. A child's brain grows 90% before they reach the age of 6. Between the ages of birth and 6 the child does much of its learning. Full Day kindergarten will be beneficial for both the school system and society. The teachers currently need to cram curriculum. Test scores will go up. Society will benefit. Increase earning potentials, there will be less arrests and drug usage, pregnancies and more stable families. Mrs. Brodbeck stated that her daughter receives OTPT and Speech thru the IU and privately. Mrs. Brodbeck has sent her to pre-school since she has been two years old. Mrs. Brodbeck does not need full day kindergarten for a baby sitter. This will effect her education if half day kindergarten is the only option available. Mrs. Brodbeck feels that all her hard work with her daughter through the years will be for null. Full day kindergarten will allow her to work her therapies through when she is not having classroom time. Board members, put the taxpayers' money where we know it will do some good. Full day kindergarten and pre-K. Bring Neshaminy back to excellence.

Mr. Eccles requested that due to the larger amount of public comment this evening the Student Representative Report take place at this time.

#### Student Representative Report

Mr. Matt Miller provided the following student representative report:

- Soccer Team has had a very successful season /District 1 Playoffs are taking place this evening
- Field Hockey won their 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive Championship
- Golf Team won the Suburban 1 Championship/Jeff Pletz finished 1<sup>st</sup> in SOL and Andrew Keeley advanced to the PA Regionals
- Homecoming was a great success with 20 booster sponsors
- Football team is tied for 2<sup>nd</sup> in the league after the Homecoming win
- Cross Country won the SOL Championships/District I Championship will be held this weekend
- Marching Band is receiving excellent reviews

Mr. Matt Miller advised that he attended a workshop in Hershey, PA which was a mock school board meeting which was very beneficial and it gave an inside view of the inner happenings within the school board.

Mr. Solis Basen, Langhorne, PA, thanked Mr. Kadri for visiting the homes of the families of the two children who were involved in the hit and run automobile accident. Mr. Basen thanked the Finance Committee for attempting to come up with some proposals for cutting expenses. Five Board members attended the meeting. In an effort to cut expenses it was suggested that maybe some of the modulars be taken off line. Mr. Basen is however not pleased that the School Board is allowing politics to permeate the school board meetings.

Mrs. Gail Longden, Langhorne, PA, advised that she has three children in Neshaminy School District. Mrs. Longden feels that there is simple solution as to whether there is a hiring committee formed. Mrs. Longden feels that the duties should be examined for School Board members and for the Superintendent. It is that simple. If it is the Superintendent's duty to do the hiring, then Mr. Kadri should be doing the hiring. Mrs. Longden feels that Mr. Kadri has done a phenomenal job and amazing things are happening within Neshaminy. Mrs. Longden would hate to see the Board tie Mr. Kadri's hands over this or any of his other duties.

Mrs. Donna Esposito, Langhorne, PA, advised that she does not support the formation of a hiring committee. The role of the school board is to set goals and policies for the district. The school board should not be interfering with the hiring process. All the hiring committee will do is bring more politics into the hiring decisions. Three years ago Mrs. Esposito made a career change and moved into the field of education. Mrs. Esposito interviewed in several districts within PA and NJ. Mrs. Esposito was interviewed by Administrators, Curriculum Coordinators, Department Chairs and even Technology Managers. Not once was a school board member present or a hiring committee involved in the interviewing process. Mrs. Esposito is currently changing jobs at the end of this week. Even though she is leaving her district her current principal asked her to sit in on the interviews for her replacement. Why, because there is trust and she interviewed the person Mrs. Esposito felt was best for the position. The reason why other school boards do not have a hiring committee is because it is just a bad idea.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mills, Langhorne, PA, thanked the mother who spoke about full day kindergarten and pre-K. Mr. Rodos stated that she articulated in a great way what he has been trying to bring across for an entire year. Mr. Rodos was so upset by the last meeting. Mr. Rodos watched the replay of the meeting and found comments made by board members to be upsetting. As a board you are the ultimate finance committee. Mr. Rodos is upset by statements like, "You're doing a great job, but..." The board's statements are a slap in the face to the two people who are in charge of staffing. Mr. Rodos hopes that if the Board would like less money spent on staff you will say so without getting further involved with a personnel committee which would never be viewed in a favorable way by anyone. Remember, the Board's job is not to run the schools, but to see that the schools are run properly. The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent sit at every meeting and are well qualified to handle all personnel issues. Mr. Rodos suggests that the Board lets them and supports them in their decisions regarding personnel. Finally, Mr. Koziol made the best suggestion regarding saving money at the last meeting with his detailed analysis of the funds which should be spent at the Tech School. We need more progress in that area, rather than in a personnel committee.

Mr. Charles Lauble, Langhorne Manor, PA, stated that he thanked the person on this Board that wanted to do the high school renovation that is taking place today. Mr. Lauble stated that he is a 66 year resident of this district, 1959 graduate from Neshaminy and his youngest son who graduated in June 2007, oldest son graduated in 1986, and daughter, who graduated in June, 2005. Any attempt to save tax money is greatly appreciated. Improving the children's education in a cost effective manner would even be more appreciated. Mr. Lauble feels that his three Neshaminy graduate children did not get the quality education that he received in 1959. Mr. Lauble also has grandchildren attending Neshaminy at Oliver Heckman. Mr. Lauble wants his grandchildren's education to improve without rationalizing that it can only happen by spending more money and it will only occur in a brand new building. Mr. Lauble attended first and second grade in a 90 year old building and proceeded on to a 50 year old building. Construction was always taking place. Mr. Lauble purchased his home in 1967 and currently there are 3,751 less pupils in this district today. Mr. Lauble earned \$3.69 hour as a machinist at Rohm and Haas. The cost per student then was \$721.85. Mr. Lauble would need to earn \$83.66 hour in relation to the cost per pupil spent today. Mr. Lauble has all the data on the school system back to the 1800's. Mr. Lauble is the local historian and has pictures of the school board back then. This school district can improve and do same in the cost effective manner. Mr. Lauble will take an hour to speak with Mr. Kadri.

#### Superintendent's Report

Mr. Kadri advised that a tragedy occurred wherein two students were involved in hit and run incidents. The parents asked for privacy to allow the healing process to occur. On behalf of the school district our deepest thoughts and prayers go out to these two families. The entire Neshaminy community is thinking about them and looking forward to them coming back to school.

Mr. Kadri read a statement regarding the Veteran's Day celebration to be held on Friday, November 9, 2007. Mr. Kadri advised that it is wonderful event for any Veterans to attend.

Mr. Kadri noted that at the November board meeting there will be a request to change the calendar for February 27, 2008. It would be satisfactory to turn that day into a full day of staff development for teachers. This will provide less hardship for families and provide opportunities for professional development for the staff.

Mr. Kadri advised that December 21<sup>st</sup> will be the last day of school for Winter Break. Students will return to school on Monday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, except the high school students. This will allow a day back for staff to come in and set up rooms in order to be prepared in the new wing to be able to receive students on January 8<sup>th</sup> at the high school.

Mr. Kadri asked Board members to review the Common Sense information located in their Board packets.

Mr. Kadri advised that the District has received a letter from the PA Department of Education stating that the PlanCon "H" project financing has been received and approved. A true and correct copy of the document is attached hereto and made a part hereof. (See Attachment A).

Mr. Kadri advised the Board that he will be providing a presentation at the November board meeting "Neshaminy, the Innovative Leader, Board and Administration Working to Support this Effort." Money and information are the most powerful tools within any organization. Discussion will take place on how to get Neshaminy the ability to have real strength in the area of information.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

Mrs. Walls presented the minutes of the September 25, 2007 public meeting. Upon motion of Mr. Bowman and seconded by Mrs. Cummings, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the September 25, 2007 Public Meeting.

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

Mr. Paradise presented the following for approval:

- September, 2007 Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit
- Check Register - September, 2007
- Budget Transfers
- Investment Summary
- Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations - September, 2007

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

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

#### **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
- Sabbatical Leaves – Certified Personnel

Board members questioned Dr. Muenker regarding certain Long Term Substitute positions.

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

Dr. Spitz moved the certified and support personnel reports be accepted. Mr. Bowman seconded the motion. Mr. Eccles requested a roll call vote of the Personnel Report. The Personnel Report was approved with eight ayes (Mrs. Barrett, Mr. Blasch, Mr. Bowman, Ms. Boyle, Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Eccles, Dr. Spitz and Mr. Webb) and one nay (Mr. Koziol).

**Motion: Declaration of American Education Week**

Mr. Webb presented the following motion:

American Education Week  
November 11-17, 2007

WHEREAS, public schools are the backbone of our democracy, providing young people with the tools they need to maintain our nation's precious values of freedom, civility, and equality; and,

WHEREAS, by equipping young Americans with both practical skills and broader intellectual abilities, public schools give them hope for, and access to, a productive future; and,

WHEREAS, public education employees, be they substitute educators, custodians, teachers, bus drivers or librarians, work tirelessly to serve our children and communities with care and professionalism; and,

WHEREAS, public schools are community catalysts, bringing together adults and children, educators and volunteers, business leaders and elected officials in a common enterprise;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors hereby proclaims November 11 – 17, 2007, as the 86<sup>th</sup> annual observance of American Education Week.

Mr. Koziol seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion.

**Motion: Approval of Revised Board Policy #126 – Facilities Dedication**

Mrs. Barrett presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors recognizes the desire of students, graduates, staff, parents, and the community to honor distinguished citizens by naming school district properties in their memory; and

WHEREAS, after review by the Board Policies Committee, the District is ready to recommend:

Revised Policy 126 - Facilities Dedication

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that said policy be revised and approved by the Neshaminy Board of School Directors.

Ms. Boyle seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion.

Dr. Spitz thanked the Board policies committee for updating and preparing same.

Board discussion ensued regarding some of the details of the revised policy. Policy committee went to great lengths to ensure that the content of the policy would allow for the best possible dedication procedures and a greater structured process involving many more individuals and community members.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

#### Federal Programs

Mr. Kadri directed Board members to the report provided.

#### Other Board Business

Mr. Koziol reviewed the bills regarding the high school project and Middletown Township. Mr. Koziol provided the following:

- Total amount of bills - \$457,931

Land development fees	\$34,500
Zoning Permit	\$347,565
Modular Permit	\$6,387
Office Fees, Electrical, Fire, etc.	\$6,408
<u>Total:</u>	<u>\$394,860</u>

Mr. Koziol is concerned why this was not discussed before. A letter was forwarded to the Township regarding same. Mr. Koziol is concerned that taxpayers of the district are suffering due to this situation. Mr. Paradise stated that feedback from the Township stated that their fees are comparable with other municipalities.

Dr. Spitz read a letter from resident Karen Gatewood:

"I always watch the school board meetings on television and I am concerned we will push a wonderful superintendent out the door.

I don't know what is going on with some of you in regard to our superintendent. I believe we are so fortunate to have him. He brings with him new ideas and a quest to improve our school district. He is always respectful to you all and seems to know what his job entails and doesn't entail. But some of you seem to fight many of his ideas or nit-pick decisions he rightly makes within the scope of his job. Do you realize that you look ridiculous and petty?

A while ago, one of you sounded completely unprofessional and ridiculous going on and on about the fact that you are smart enough to be on a committee to oversee hiring of new employees. You seemed to be offended over an accusation never made. It was obvious to me the issue was control. Paul Kadri has been nothing but honest, fair and intelligent in what I've seen of him. I have absolutely no qualms that he will do his job professionally and honestly. The rant, while interesting to watch, was a real disservice to the professionalism of the board. What motive, if not political, was this rant about?

This past board meeting the same board member continued trying to cause problems. Watching this was like watching a laughable TV drama. A legitimate dialogue was derailed by grandstanding. What motive, if not political, was this rant about?

This last meeting this committee idea was brought up again. Leave it alone. Let the Superintendent do his job. It doesn't reflect well on any of you.

I hesitate to berate a volunteer, but in my opinion you are really damaging the credibility of our school district by the conduct at the public meetings. "

**Public Comment**

None.

**Board Comment**

Mr. Webb stated that Mr. O'Connor several years ago recommended an oversight committee. Mr. Webb stated that he is also suggesting the creation of an oversight committee primarily to see whether a position is necessary. Mr. Webb feels a hiring/oversight committee is a good idea. Mr. Webb feels that without some type of committee no positions will ever be eliminated. Mr. Koziol is in support of Mr. Webb. Statistics show that there are less students, however, no less staffing positions.

Dr. Spitz feels that Mr. Koziol's staffing numbers are incorrect. Dr. Spitz feels that the district would be foolish to turn down federally funded positions that are paid for by the federal government allowing the district to provide increased services for the students. The role of the board is not to help select any particular candidate. That is the role of the administration. The role of the board is to make sure the process that the Administration proceeds with is fair, unbiased and it does not involve politics. Dr. Spitz is confident that the district's current procedures do that. It is the Board's discretion to accept or reject the Administration's recommendation. Dr. Spitz remains opposed to a Personnel Committee.

Mr. Webb disagrees with the numbers and federally funded programs were also in position ten years ago. There are indeed more employees than there was ten years ago.

Ms. Boyle noted that the Board has the authority to approve or not to approve. Ms. Boyle feels that only the most qualified people are appointed to the positions. Ms. Boyle feels questions are absolutely necessary and not all Board members are politically motivated. Ms. Boyle only wants to see the best qualified individuals receive the positions.

Mr. Eccles noted that the Committee is in the investigatory stage, it has not been formed to date, and further input is welcome. The Board has a responsibility to the students, taxpayers, and parents that the best possible education is being provided.

Mr. Kadri noted that meetings took place regarding said hiring committee. Mr. Webb, Mr. Bowman and Mr. Eccles did not attend. The opinions of the Board at the time were wide. Mr. Koziol made it clear that his intention was to have the Administration recommend three candidates to the Board and the Board would select the best candidate. Mr. Kadri is not in favor of this.

Mr. Kadri would like to speak to the Board as a whole regarding outside influences that are trying to penetrate the hiring process. To date, the hiring that has occurred has been done without bias.

Mr. Bowman inquired whether the formation of the committee is Executive Session material. Mr. Profy responded that it is policy issue, not an individual personnel issue.

Mr. Kadri wants a cooperative relationship to move forward. Mr. Kadri feels it is in the best interest of the district to work out the issues and come back completely focused on the students.

Mr. Eccles noted that the Board is obligated under State law to only hold private meetings that fall under Executive Session guidelines. Sunshine law must be taken very seriously. Things need to be discussed in public.

Mr. Profy stated that if the matter deals with a specific individual it needs to occur in Executive Session. The forming of a Personnel/Oversight Committee, criteria for participation, function of the committee, is not a



Public Meeting of the Neshaminy Board of School Directors (cont.)  
October 23, 2007

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personnel matter. Mr. Kadri noted that when the Board does meet to discuss the matter Mr. Profy would be in attendance to ensure that no Sunshine Law regulations would arise.

**Adjournment of Meeting**

Mr. Bowman moved the meeting be adjourned and Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

Respectively submitted,



Anita E. Walls  
Board Secretary