

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS

October 28, 2008

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on October 28, 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
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise
Dr. Sandra Costanzo
Dr. Geeta A. Heble
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan

SECRETARY:

Mrs. Anita E. Walls

SOLICITOR:

Thomas Profy, III, Esquire

OTHERS: Approximately 55 persons from the public, staff and press

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

Mrs. Marianne O'Connor, President of the Neshaminy High School Vocal Music Boosters, advised that it was stated at previous school board meetings that the construction would not interfere with the student's learning, but recently word has been received that that just may be happening. It seems that a wall is scheduled to be built at the end of "D" hall in January a few weeks before the musical is to open. This wall would prevent access to rooms and hallways needed to put on the high quality performance that this district has been known for. Performing in a musical is not an after school club for music major students, but it is where student's take the skills they have been taught in class and present them for audience approval. By performing in front of a live audience it let's them know that they have mastered their craft and gives them the confidence to continue in their significant studies. Mrs. O'Connor questioned whether there was someone responsible at the high school to inform staff when construction will be in their area. If so, when is the information supposed to be relayed to the staff involved. If there is someone who is involved it is their responsibility to keep the staff informed and Mrs. O'Connor would like to know their name. Mrs. O'Connor is sure that there is some type of schedule provided by the construction company as to when each phase will be implemented. It is very important that communication be thorough and constant during the renovation. Had communication been

done properly arrangements could have been made so that the Neshaminy tradition of a high quality performance could have been done without any problems. This should have been addressed before all the music teachers made their schedules for this year. The musical could have been moved up and had same as early as December, 2008. Ms. Cloak offered some suggestions that would allow the students to perform their show on the date scheduled. Ms. Cloak asked that the construction of the wall be held off until after the musical or the demolition would take place only as far as the girl's bathroom in "D" hall. This would allow the construction company to begin their work, and after the musical the wall could be moved to the end of "D" hall. Ms. Cloak was told that neither one of these options would be considered. Mr. Menio has been extremely helpful in trying to find a solution that would make everyone happy. We thank him for all his efforts. An option suggested was placing a curtain four feet from the back of the stage. This would allow the actors to make their stage entrances from both sides, but this option poses quite a few problems as well. Productions can have upwards of 100 students and safety issues are of a concern. Stage space is critical. Another possible option was to hold the high school musical at Maple Point. This suggestion only came about since word got out that there were many upset students and parents. No consideration was given as to how this would affect the students. Maple Point performs their show a couple weeks after the high school play. One stage, two casts trying to use the same space during the same rehearsal times. It is very important for performers to be familiar with their surroundings. Practicing on one stage and then performing on another with virtually no time to adjust poses a safety issue to the performers. Not enough space for two sets to be built and stored. Providing transportation for the high school students will be an issue. Many high school students work after rehearsal and getting home from Maple Point in enough time for work may not be possible. The best option looks like building a wall closest to the girls' bathroom in "D" hall and then demolishing same after the show. This would allow this phase of the construction to begin. Mrs. O'Connor is sure this conversation would not be taking place if this construction would be blocking access to the football field. No way would the Administration tell the team that after many months of practice they would not be able to play their last two games on the Neshaminy field. That is what you will be telling these musical students. Mrs. O'Connor is asking the Board to step up and do the right thing for the students. Show the students that you care and that you are willing to compromise. After all the show must go on.

Mr. Daniel O'Connor, Langhorne, PA, is a junior at Neshaminy High School and advised that Ms. Cloak has advised that the construction plans on cutting off part of "D" hall behind the stage and demolishing same. This closes off the entrance to stage right, the costume and prop room, and some of the floor space needed for sets. Ms. Cloak immediately tried to find some compromises that both accommodated the students as well as the construction. Entering from one side of the stage ruins the elusion of the show. To all the students the compromises do not seem so extreme. Some suggestions were made; however, they will not work. As actors they bring the audience on a trip to the time period that they are acting out. By cutting off half the stage the elusion is ruined. Putting the show on at Maple Point is a very bad idea. Too many conflicts would occur. Actors get used to the stage they are to perform on and this would be an issue if the Maple Point stage were to be used. Mr. O'Connor stated that the School Board has the power to delay construction. The musical is a learning experience for students. Board members stated that the construction would not interrupt student learning. What do you call this?

Mr. Kadri advised of the following:

- Hallway behind the stage is being consumed by construction, the rooms behind same give up storage space.
- Asbestos abatement is scheduled for the area.
- Demolition and renovation to follow.
- Asbestos abatement must take place in the entire area first. It must be sealed.
- What would be the least compromised solution?
- Facilities will speak with the construction managers concerning potential solutions.
- The high school is preferable location for said show.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, PA, stated that he is glad that the Board and Administration are actively trying to work out the problem with the show. Mr. Rodos thanked the Board for having a community meeting at Oliver Heckman. It was well received by the public and Mr. Rodos looks forward to future meetings at other schools. Mr. Rodos is a long time judge of the high school debate league in Southeastern Pennsylvania and informed the Board that Neshaminy High School will be hosting the first debate of this season on November 5th after an absence of over two years. Mr. Rodos attended the technology meeting last night and Mr. Rodos commended Mrs. Christie for the great effort that she is expended with the continuation of the Technology upgrades and program. A certified technology teacher in each elementary school would be the best way to continue with technology education. It makes no sense to wait until a student reaches middle school to undo all the bad habits that would be picked up at the elementary level. Mr. Rodos urged the Board to please approve all the day to day subs, including number 39, on page 45.

Student Representative Report

Ms. Betsy Thomas, Student Council Vice-President, advised of the following:

- Fall season of sports teams are near conclusion – Golf and Field Hockey Teams and Suburban I League champions. Field Hockey and Soccer Teams have both advanced to the State tournament. Football team is in the process of clinching a playoff berth. They recently defeated CR South at their homecoming. The Football team will be playing for the SLL Championship of Halloween night vs. Pennsbury.
- The Kaleidoscope of Bands was conducted at Neshaminy.
- Fall Drama takes place from November 13th-15th in the Performing Arts Center.

PSBA Student Delegate/School Leadership Conference Report

Mr. John Sutton, Student Council President, advised of the following:

- Recently attended the PSBA Student Delegate program based on leadership.
- Taught students regarding current issues, how school boards work, and possible solutions of current issues.
- Mr. Sutton presented in front of 600 students and a mock school board.
- Mr. Sutton thanked the Board for allowing students to attend the PSBA Leadership Conference.

Superintendent's Report

Mr. Kadri advised of the following:

- Congratulated Mr. Paradise on renewal of his PA School Business Administrators certificate for twenty consecutive years of excellence.
- November 10th – Veteran's Day celebration at Maple Point.
- Poquessing Pool - ultraviolet light is working very well.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Walls presented the minutes of the September 23, 2008 public meeting. Upon motion of Dr. Spitz and seconded by Mr. O'Connor the Board approved the minutes of the September 23, 2008 Public Meeting by a vote of eight ayes and zero nays. Mr. Eccles was not present.

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

Mr. Paradise presented the following for approval:

- September, 2008 Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit
- Check Register – September, 2008
- Investment Summary
- Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations – September, 2008
- Budget Transfer Report (Working Copy 09-1)

Mr. Webb moved the September, 2008 treasurer's report, subject to audit, check register, investments, exonerations of personal and per capita tax and budget transfer report be approved. Ms. Boyle seconded the motion.

The Board approved the Treasurer's Reports, subject to audit, check registers, investments and personal and per capita tax exonerations and budget transfer report by a vote of eight ayes and zero nays. Mr. Eccles was not present.

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
- Sabbatical Leaves of Certified Personnel

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

Mr. Blasch moved the Certified and Support personnel reports be accepted. Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the Certified and Support Personnel Reports.

Motion: Neshaminy High School Improvement Plan

Mrs. Cummings presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, Neshaminy High School is required to submit a School Improvement Plan and District Supplement to the Pennsylvania Department of Education as a result of being a school in Corrective Action II, Year 2, as designated by the Pennsylvania School System of Assessment; and

WHEREAS, a team of professionals from Neshaminy High School met over a period of two months to develop a comprehensive framework and strategies for a plan for Corrective Action; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approve the Neshaminy High School Improvement Plan and authorize the Administration to submit the plan to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the implementation of the financial components will be dependent upon School Board approval of the annual operating budgets of the Neshaminy School District.

Mr. Koziol seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

Motion: Sandburg Middle School Improvement Plan

Dr. Spitz presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, Sandburg Middle School is required to submit a School Improvement Plan to the Pennsylvania Department of Education as a result of being a school in School Improvement I, as designated by the Pennsylvania School System of Assessment; and

WHEREAS, a team of professionals from Sandburg Middle School met over a period of two months to develop a comprehensive framework and strategies for a plan for School Improvement; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approve the Sandburg Middle School Improvement Plan and authorize the Administration to submit the plan to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the implementation of the financial components will be dependent upon School Board approval of the annual operating budgets of the Neshaminy School District.

Mr. Webb seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

Motion: Revisions of Board Policies 102 and 521

Mr. Eccles presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, in order to keep District Board Policies updated and current, new policies and revisions are recommended by the administration to the Board Policies Committee for review; and

WHEREAS, recommended policies meet the requirements of Federal Law; and

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

Revised Policy 102 – Selection and Election of Administrative Personnel

Revised Policy 521 – Health Examinations/Screenings

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

Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: Rental of a Portion of Neshaminy Middle School to St. Mary Medical Center

Mr. Koutsouradis presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the St. Mary Medical Center has expressed an interest in a short term lease of a small portion of Neshaminy Middle School during their renovations; and

WHEREAS, this space is available due to the recent closure of our facility.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors authorize the Business Administrator to execute a lease with the St. Mary Medical Center for the use of a portion of Neshaminy Middle School.

BE IT FURTHER RESOVLED, that the terms of the lease are for the approximate period from October 29, 2008 to June 30, 2009 for a fee of \$7,500 per month, as indicated in the proposed Agreement.

Mr. Blasch seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: New Bank Account with Citizens Bank

Mr. Koziol presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Public School Code requires that the Board of School Directors approve all bank accounts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors authorizes the establishment of a Municipal Money Market Account with Citizens Bank in the name of Neshaminy School District, Account No. 8202276533.

Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: Declaration of American Education Week

Mr. O'Connor presented the following motion:

AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK
November 16-22, 2008

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 16-22, 2008, as a 87th annual observance of American Education Week.

Ms. Boyle seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Federal Programs

Mr. Kadri advised that \$88,000 was received this year for the Classrooms of the Future grant which is considerably less than last year. It was a significant budgetary cut on behalf of the state.

Mr. Profy recommended that the Board make a motion to approve the settlement of tax assessment appeal #22-42-16 via fixing the 2008 assessment at \$1,137,500 and 2009 assessment at \$1,175,000.

Mr. O'Connor made a motion to approve the settlement of tax assessment appeal #22-42-16 via fixing the 2008 assessment at \$1,137,500 and the 2009 assessment at \$1,175,000.

Mr. Koziol seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Future Topics

Other Board Business

Mr. Kadri stated that in terms of communication at the high school there is not a person responsible for communicating the construction timetable and the school calendar, however, there is an individual who has maintained a level of communication between issues at the high school and the construction. The demolition of the hallway is a major issue and the combination of many little details that are causing the current issue. Discussions are presently taking place to remedy the problem.

Mr. Kadri stated that 9th graders moving up to the high school require three steps, the physical capabilities of the high school, courses that will be offered, staff transition (certification requirements). 9th graders in the music department need to be linked with 10, 11 & 12th graders and courses need to align. Students at the high school can presently take an extra class (7th major). Lunch is eaten in class and therefore the student can take an extra elective which is marked on a pass/fail class. Currently, in the 9th grade that option does not exist. Music is slightly different than other electives. Music has band, orchestra and chorus.

Mr. Kadri is concerned that there will be a smooth transition of all the content areas and be able to provide the freshman next year with the same integrity of program that they currently have in the middle school system.

Formal discussions will be taking place in the upcoming weeks regarding the 9th grade elective classes and the importance is to maintain the high integrity and morale of the students.

Mr. O'Connor questioned what the building utilization would be for 2009. Mr. Kadri responded that he believed it was in the mid 90%. Mr. Kadri advised that an analysis was taking place regarding room utilization and types of rooms for different content areas.

Mr. Kadri stated that 8th & 9th grade course selection would probably take place in November or December. Course scheduling will follow and student flow will be analyzed. Dr. Spitz inquired whether the Board will be given an opportunity to discuss upcoming decisions. Mr. Kadri feels that it is very important that the Board take an active role in said process.

Discussions ensued regarding course selection and student requirements at high school level.

Dr. Spitz suggested that there might be some limitations to 9th graders taking a 7th major. Mr. Kadri noted that the district is currently looking at an analysis of space utilization and the classroom period.

Mr. Eccles advised that if a student selects a 7th major there is no guarantee that you will get that course strictly due to an availability basis. Core courses are selected and if a student wishes to take a 7th major and same is available and the student's other courses allow for said course the district does what they can to accommodate that selection.

Public comment from the audience stated that this was a lack of poor planning and Administrative convenience. Careful planning was not made in terms of the construction project and late planning with regards to student course selection. Concerns were raised regarding extra curricular. In the past students would select a variety of electives to have a broad liberal arts education beginning at a secondary level which really spoke to the credit of Neshaminy. Parent and students should be engaged in the upcoming conversations regarding same.

Mr. Kadri noted that the public would be informed as soon as possible regarding the outcome of both the course selection process and the situation of the musical performance.

Mr. Koziol commented regarding the "Super Frosh" Rule revocation. Mr. Koziol stated that it should not be the intent to hold back any student from participating at the highest level that he can compete. Mr. Koziol thinks that if same is a rule the Board should consider changing same.

Mr. O'Connor provided statistics from the American Music Conference website and the impact of music education on students in terms of academics. Students of the arts continue to outperform their non arts peers on the SATs. In 2001 students involved in the arts their SAT results were 57% higher on verbal and 41% high on math portion than students with no course work in the arts. Newsweek also had articles stated the same: Teach kids music and they will be better in math.

Further dialogue took place regarding 9th grade students and their selection of a 7th major.

Public Comment

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flower Mills, Langhorne, PA inquired regarding the tax exemption for senior citizens. Mr. Paradise advised that discussions regarding that topic will be taking place at the Facilities and Finance Committee meeting.

Neshaminy High School student commented that the course selection process is difficult and if the school does not encourage students to take all their options the student cannot become the person they are striving to be. It is also not fair to hinder the 9th graders in the course selection process.

Board Comment

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 8:05 p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Anita E. Walls
Board Secretary