

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
November 23, 2010

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on November 23, 2010, in the Harry M. Dengler, Jr. Performing Arts Center at Maple Point Middle School. The following persons were in attendance:

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mr. Ritchie Webb, President
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Vice President
Ms. Irene M. Boyle
Mr. Scott Congdon
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Richard M. Eccles
Mr. Mike Morris
Mr. William D. O'Connor
Mr. William Oettinger

ADMINISTRATORS:

Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Mr. Joseph V. Paradise
Mrs. Patricia Boylan
Dr. Geeta Heble

BOARD MEMBER ABSENT:

OTHERS: Approximately 200 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Jennifer Burns

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, IV, Esquire

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

Call to Order

Mr. Webb called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Announcements

None

Public Comment

Dean Troutman, retired, Penndel, voiced his support for the Board and strongly urged them to stand firm with the healthcare issue.

Susan Koch, small business owner, Langhorne, announced that she and her friend, Michele Fey, started an online petition to allow Neshaminy taxpayers to voice their opinions to the School Board. Ms. Koch stated, to date there are 746 signatures on the petition. Ms. Koch read numerous comments all voicing their support for the School Board and imploring the School Board to stand firm in negotiations. She asked the School Board not to let the taxpayers down during the next meeting on December 2nd.

Lisa Pflaumer, business owner, Langhorne, wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and gave thanks to the Board for its courage, determination, and their persistence in the negotiations. She said that everyone is hoping for a resolution to the negotiations in the near future. She thanked the teachers for their courage to

push their union leadership into repelling the work to contract action. Mrs. Pflaumer also personally thanked her son's fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Emig, and the school principal, Mrs. Miguelez, for their cooperation during a recent family trip to Japan. Mrs. Pflaumer explained that the teacher supplied her son with his work assignments so he could keep up with his studies, while they visited her husband who is deployed to Afghanistan.

Michael Caputo, retired, Penndel, thanked the taxpayers, parents, and School Board members for their efforts and said he is grateful that the work to contract has ended. Mr. Caputo said that contrary to union belief, most taxpayers in the Neshaminy School District do not support the NFT's position. He stated that the overwhelming support for the School Board sends out the message that parents and taxpayers want a quality education for their children at a fair price with no more backroom deals and giving into unreasonable demands. Mr. Caputo thanked those teachers that were courageous enough to rise above the uncaring principles of their leadership and putting the children first, building young minds, and being their inspiration.

Larry Pastor, Business Executive, Langhorne, stated that he is very proud of the community for their unified and consistent resolve in fighting against something that is so wrong. Mr. Pastor mentioned the online petition and urged every member of the Board to review the comments made by the petitioners. Mr. Pastor commented that the salary scale can be deceiving if one does not take into consideration the steps along with the increases. He urged the community to become aware of the mathematical calculations that are necessary to see the true picture. He also stated that Matt Pileggi has a calculator on his website that demonstrates the steps added to the raises indicating what the true increases are.

Mark Shubin, sales executive, Langhorne, opened his comments by stating over the years that Neshaminy had a reputation of being an outstanding school district; however, in recent years that perception has diminished. Mr. Shubin stated that the new contract has to concentrate on continued improvement nothing less than excellence, and most important metrics. He stated that it is time that the district had in place the necessary performance based metrics that can be used to rid the school of underperforming employees. Mr. Shubin said that the great teachers in this district need to be given a chance to get the respect that they deserve, while poorly performing members need to be put on documented improvement plans with clear metrics of success with the necessary coaching and if that doesn't work out they should be dismissed. Mr. Shubin said unless we reward excellence we miss an opportunity to affect children in a positive way. Mr. Shubin once again invited the NFT to speak directly to the public regarding their issues. Mr. Shubin concluded by thanking the Board for their hard work and dedication to the school district.

Steven Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, questioned whether the pay raises with steps is equitable to the education of the children in the district. Mr. Pirritano says there has to be a merit equation. He stated that in the private sector an individual is judged on performance and he thinks this should be implemented for the teachers. Mr. Pirritano urged the Board to try to negotiate a merit system into the contract and move away from the status quo.

Steve Rodos, semi-retired, Villages of Flowers Mill, Langhorne, inquired whether a replacement has been found for Mr. Paradise who is retiring at the end of December. He also questioned whether the district will be faced with the added expense of a new administrator and the expense of retaining Mr. Paradise as a consultant throughout the first few months of 2011. Mr. Rodos stated that there is room for negotiations in many areas of the current contract. He says the status quo favors no one. Mr. Rodos suggested that smaller class size would help education, computer classes in elementary schools, and investment in current teaching methods and equipment. He also suggested that a lower cost health plan, contribution of 15% towards healthcare, and eliminating healthcare for retirees would result in significant savings to the school district, which could be reinvested into education.

Charles Alfonso, semi-retired sales executive, Langhorne, suggested that in the interest of fair play and full disclosure all negotiation meetings should be televised or broadcast, so that the Neshaminy taxpayers can hear and see the NFT's viewpoints on T.V. Mr. Alfonso disputed the statement made by the union leader regarding the teachers and administrators are equal partners with the School Board. Mr. Alfonso said that the relationship is merely employee and employers. Mr. Alfonso urged the Board to invite New Jersey Governor, Chris Christie, to speak at a School Board meeting and offer his opinions on negotiating a contract. He also urged the Board to remember the work to contract action during the upcoming negotiations.

Almando Carrasquillo, retired state trooper and investigator, Laurel Oaks, Langhorne, offered his apologies for his former apathy regarding School Board meetings. Mr. Carrasquillo explained that the work to contract brought the issues to his attention and forced him to attend the meetings and take a stand. He also pledged that he would do his best to attend each meeting and support the School Board and he urged each parent and taxpayer to do the same. Mr. Carrasquillo advised the Board that if their current offer is not accepted they should pull the offer and the next offer should be less.

Matt Pileggi, computer programmer, Levittown, announced that he has a new website at www.GetRealNeshaminy.com that explains the salary schedule with a calculator that allows one to choose any salary in the steps and calculate the impact of the NFT's proposal including retro pay. Mr. Pileggi said that the community has come together and survived the work to contract and with a united front will survive any future tactic, be it a strike, a reinstatement of work to contract, or some newly created initiative until this is settled. Mr. Pileggi urged the Board to remember their commitment to the taxpayers of Neshaminy and not allow the NFT to dictate the financial commitment and educational future of the majority.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Muenker advised the Board on the following:

- The Maple Point Family, including students, staff, and PTO collected food items and turkeys to help those in need.
- Neshaminy High School Family and Consumer Science students prepared their annual Thanksgiving Feast.
- Ferderbar Elementary helped needy families in the area by holding their annual Elf Fund Spaghetti Dinner, which raised over \$1,800.00.
- The Family and Consumer Science Majors at Neshaminy High School decorated Attleboro Nursing Home for the holidays.
- 2010 - 2011 Personal Per Capita Tax due by December 15, 2010.
- Neshaminy High School store will be open for Holiday shopping on Monday, December 13th, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- Poquessing Environmental Club collected gently used clothing in honor of National Recycle Day (November 15th) and donated those items to the Purple Heart.
- Carl Sandburg hosted a Veteran's Day Program on November 22nd, and one of the speakers was Sergeant Eric Hutchinson, of the United States Army a former Carl Sandburg student and graduate of Neshaminy High School.
- Maple Point hosted a Veteran's Day Program on November 23rd, and the guest speaker was Congressman Murphy.
- Eighth grade Family and Consumer Science students at Sandburg constructed useable grocery bags for the annual food drive.
- Congratulations went out to Megan Millman, who was the 2009-2010 Playwickian Columbia Scholastic Press Association silver medal award winner.
- 2010 Neshaminy School District Property Tax Assistance Program will begin in January, 2011, which provides property tax relief to our senior citizens.

Dr. Muenker presented Mr. Paradise with a plaque for his outstanding devotion and service to the Neshaminy School District for over 36 years.

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Burns presented the minutes of October, 26 2010, Public Board Meeting and November 9, 2010 Work Session Meeting. Upon motion of Mrs. Cummings and seconded by Ms. Boyle the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the October 26, 2010, Public Board Meeting and November 9, 2010, Work Session Meeting.

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

Mr. Paradise presented the following for approval:

- October, 2010 Treasurer's Report, subject to audit
- Check Register – October, 2010
- Budget Transfer Report 11-2
- Personal and per capita tax exonerations for October, 2010

Mr. Eccles moved the October, 2010, Treasurer's Report be approved, subject to audit, Check Register for October, 2010, Budget Transfer Report 11-2, and the Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations for October, 2010 be approved. Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said report.

Certified and Support Personnel Actions

Dr. Muenker presented the following for approval:

- Elections – Certified Personnel
- Resignations and Leaves of Absence – Certified Personnel
- Elections – Support Personnel
- Sabbatical Leaves – Certified Personnel

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

Mr. O'Connor moved that the personnel report for certified and support personnel be approved and Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said reports.

Motion: Contracted Transportation Services for 2010-11

Mr. Eccles presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the school district transports public, private, and parochial school students in accordance with the applicable state laws; and

WHEREAS, private contractors are sometimes used if it is more practical and less expensive to do so with other than district staff and vehicles.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors authorizes the administration to enter into a private contract for the 2010-11 school year for the transportation of certain students in accordance with state regulations as follows:

Contract	Lakeside Youth Services	\$63,018
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TOTAL \$63,018

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Business Administrator is authorized to sign this contract on behalf of the school district.

Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: Revised Policies 129 and 528 and New Policies 228, 328 and 428

Mr. Koutsouradis presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, in order to keep District Board Policies updated and current, revisions and new policies 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 129 – Open Records

Revised Policy 528 (formally Policy 517) – Communicable Disease Prevention

New Policies 228, 328 and 428 – Communicable Disease Prevention

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approves the revised Policies and new Policies as recommended by the School Board Policies Committee.

Ms. Boyle seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion.

Motion: Approval of Firm for Facilities Study

Mr. Morris presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy Board of School Directors desires to move forward with a complete update of its study of district wide facilities; and

WHEREAS, the original study was previously prepared and updated by McKissick Associates, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, this study assisted in the consolidation of Middle Schools in 2008; and

WHEREAS, the firm will also provide an analysis of enrollment, population trends, projections, and a complete study of the capacities of our facilities with recommendations to improve overall efficiency of use and building utilization.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of School Directors accept the proposal from McKissick Associates Inc., as attached, in the NOT TO EXCEED amount of \$22,500.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Business Administrator be authorized to execute the agreement upon review of the Solicitor.

Mr. O'Connor seconded the motion.

Mr. Koutsouradis stated that he cannot support this motion due to the current economic climate, and the cost to the district.

Mr. O'Connor pointed out that originally there was some skepticism on the part of many residents regarding the study's findings. Additionally, he reminded the Board that there have been some significant events and changes over the past few years. Mr. O'Connor stated that the study will give the Board clear direction for opportunities to reduce facilities and consolidate other buildings so the money will be well spent in order to save millions.

Mr. Eccles mentioned that the school district in 2007, 2008, paid \$44,000 on the initial study and at this time the Board already has a general idea on the direction it needs to take. For this reason, Mr. Eccles cannot support this motion.

Mr. Morris inquired if the report would take into consideration a charter school and the cause and effect that it would have.

Mr. O'Connor responded that he does not anticipate that it would be taken into consideration because the district is dealing with the facilities that they currently have.

Mr. Morris expressed his reluctance to support this motion.

Mr. Congdon inquired if there was a time restraint regarding the study.

Mr. O'Connor responded that there is a time issue in the sense that closing a facility can involve many factors such as public opinion and reaction. Mr. O'Connor said that he would not like to see any more time wasted on further discussions and it is time to move forward with a decision.

Mr. Webb made a motion to have the Approval of Firm for Facilities Study be tabled and Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

Mr. Webb called for a roll call tally. The tally indicated the motion passed by a vote of six ayes, (Ms. Boyle, Mr. Congdon, Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. Oettinger, and Mr. Webb) and three nays, (Mr. Eccles, Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. Morris.)

Federal Programs

Dr. Muenker stated that there were two additional awards for the month of November. Title III Language Instruction for LEP and Immigrant Students in the amount of \$27,701.00 and Least Restrictive Environment Grant in the amount of \$25,000.00, which brings the total amount to \$2,129,496.00.

Other Board Business

None

Public Comment

Steven Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, acknowledged Mr. Paradise's dedicated service to the Neshaminy School District and stated that his shoes will be hard to fill. Mr. Pirritano urged the Board to maintain the current leadership status of the School Board during the upcoming reorganization meeting. He stated that the Board should remain a united front because with division comes weakness and unity breeds strength. Mr. Pirritano asked if the Board can shed some light on the issue of pay increases with steps and where it

originated. He further requested that the Board let parents and taxpayers know what legislations are hindering contract negotiations, so the public will be better informed when speaking with their state representatives.

Matt Pileggi, computer programmer, Levittown, invited the public to visit his website www.getreálneshaminy.com. Mr. Pileggi cited an example of a teacher at step ten with a master's degree plus thirty who would gain a 19 percent increase or if they move diagonally they would gain a 27.6 percent increase according to the NFT's proposed rates. Mr. Pileggi said his calculator demonstrates that the actual increases are far above the 3 percent that is being portrayed. He also mentioned that about 43 percent of the staff is already at maximum salary.

Samantha Blasch, Neshaminy student, thanked the School Board for standing up for the students of Neshaminy. She expressed her pleasure that the work to contract has been suspended and that the students of Neshaminy will be ready to stand up and face any similar problems that may arise in the future.

Bill Miller, Vice President of the Bucks County ProLife Coalition, mentioned that he is inquiring on behalf of the Coalition whether the monies paid toward healthcare for the NFT would cover abortions. Mr. Miller further inquired if the healthcare plan specifies exactly what procedures are covered and he stated that if abortion is one of the procedures the Coalition would strongly protest their money being used as such.

Larry Pastor, Business Executive, Langhorne, saluted Mr. Paradise for his outstanding service to the community for the past 36 years. Mr. Pastor said that for many years Mr. Paradise was the voice of reason, logic, tyranny of the numbers, and the reality of the district. He also said that Mr. Paradise was always consistent with his message to steer every School Board in the right direction. Mr. Pastor applauded the present School Board for listening to Mr. Paradise and taking his advice. Mr. Pastor said that the community is extremely grateful to Mr. Paradise and wishes him well on his future endeavors.

Board Comment

Mr. O'Connor thanked Susan Koch and Michele Fey for organizing the petition and to the public for their support.

Mr. Koutsouradis thanked the NFT for stopping the work to contract. He also thanked Mrs. Pflaumer for her comments and also Mr. Pflaumer for serving our country.

Mr. Morris thanked Mr. Paradise for his service to the district and said he will be very difficult to replace.

Mrs. Cummings thanked Mr. Paradise for his years of service and especially his guidance during budget time. She concluded with wishing Mr. Paradise well and said he will be greatly missed.

Ms. Boyle thanked Mr. Paradise for his extraordinary leadership and said that he has the ability to explain policies and communicate with new Board members. She extended her best wishes to Mr. Paradise and said that she will miss him.

Mr. Congdon expressed his appreciation for Mr. Paradise's 36 years of service and his patience and kindness towards new Board members.

Mr. Eccles reminded the public that they need to hold elected officials to a higher standard. He said it is necessary to elect individuals who will stand up and do the right thing. Mr. Eccles said that change is hard and it takes time, but this Board is committed to taking the necessary steps to make the right decisions. He concluded by stating that Mr. Paradise will be missed.

Mr. Paradise stated that it has been an extremely difficult decision to retire; however, he is leaving with the feelings of good fortune for working with such a fine school district. Mr. Paradise said that he is leaving behind many exceptional staff members that he has had the pleasure of working with for over 36 years. He thanked the School Board members and the public for making his a career of a lifetime.

Mr. Webb stated that steps are done in all surrounding school districts, but to the best of his knowledge, it is not a state mandate. Neshaminy follows a 1 to 11, 11 years being the highest step. Mr. Webb reminded the public to vote for legislation banning teacher's strike, because work to contract is a form of striking. Mr. Webb stated that in Neshaminy a Master's equivalency qualifies for a pay increase. He further explained that in the current Board proposal the Master's equivalency would be grandfathered in for anyone who has already achieved it, but future employees would not be eligible. Mr. Webb stated that he would look into the health question further.

Mr. Morris stated that the healthcare plan does cover abortion procedures.

Adjournment

Mr. O'Connor moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Burns
Board Secretary