

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
REORGANIZATION MEETING
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
December 3, 2007

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on December 3, 2007 in the Board Room at 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 M. Boyle
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Kim Koutsouradis
Mr. William O'Connor
Dr. William H. Spitz
Mr. Ritchie Webb

ADMINISTRATORS:

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

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, IV, Esquire

SECRETARY:

Mrs. Anita E. Walls

OTHERS: Approximately 30 persons from the public, staff and press

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.

Public Comment

Mr. Bill Dittinger, Feasterville, PA, stated that he attended the last school board meeting and left with a disgusting taste in his mouth with the travesty the Board played in the hiring of the new Athletic Director. Here are some facts: Candidate A was an overwhelming majority winner by the Administration after several interviews over six weeks. The peers of Candidate B rejected him basically saying his experience did not outweigh the qualifications of Candidate A. The Board placed pressure on the Administration to cover up the fact that Administration had picked Candidate A by doing a back room vote. Several present and past board members exerted pressure on the board to vote for a close family or neighborhood friend. This fact alone smacks of cronyism and gives the air of dishonesty by not bringing all the facts to light. The Board had broke its own hiring policy and once the results did not go their way, fell back into the system of its not what you know but who you know. The Board placed the school district in a poor position of discriminating against a highly qualified female candidate, and hopefully, this does not cost the taxpayers of Neshaminy. It sets the tone that employment at Neshaminy is based on the good old boy network. The Board's decision does not improve the district, but it hurts people based on trust and fairness and qualifying women or other minorities by telling them that they need not apply unless they are part of the network. The Board may dispute these facts or spin them, but the vote was a bad day for all Neshaminy district residents.

Mrs. Stacy Kirsch, Langhorne, PA, stated that she is appalled by the outrageous decision that the elected Neshaminy Board members announced during the last board meeting in regards to the hiring of the new Athletic Director. Mrs. Kirsch is speechless as to how a group of elected officials can undermine the educated and carefully thought out recommendation of school Administrators. Our School Board is supposed to be made up of people that can be trusted and who care about the education of the children. The School Board is empowered by the community to make sound hiring decisions. It concerns Mrs. Kirsch that the Board members are elected members and they are using their power to help further the career of a friend instead of the most qualified candidate. Through this display of nepotism, the Board has lost the trust of the community

and actions speak louder than words. Mrs. Kirsch hopes that the Board learns that through this experience. The community depends on the Board's actions to make the Neshaminy School District the best in the county. Please keep this in mind as the Board enters and encounters future openings.

Mr. Steve Rodos, Villages of Flowers Mills, Langhorne, PA, stated that he is providing the Board with all the information regarding full time kindergarten. There are three financial considerations for full time kindergarten in Neshaminy:

1. Cost to the district - Additional 14 teachers would be needed at a cost of \$77,000 for a total of \$1.78M additional funding. This would be the maximum needed if 770 students who were born 5 years ago all would enroll in Neshaminy for full time kindergarten.
2. The resources necessary for full day kindergarten: Classroom space, equipment and materials. Based on the study completed earlier this year there is sufficient space in the elementary schools to provide full day kindergarten. Equipment and materials should not be an overwhelming expense.
3. Funding sources: School District, Federal Government under Title 1 grants, Accountability Block Grants.

Additional Sources of Funds which do not require raising taxes:

1. Charge the family of every kindergarten student \$150 per month for the ten months they will be enrolled in full time kindergarten. This figure will eliminate the total cost to the School District. Revenue neutral.
2. Funding through the Neshaminy Education Foundation which could be called a mandatory, voluntary donation. This fits within the guidelines of the Neshaminy Education Foundation.
3. Approach the large business interests, i.e. Toll Brothers, McCafferty, McGrath Homes, within the School District, and ask for donations to fund kindergarten.
4. Imposition of a parking tax of 10% on all parking lots within the district that charge for parking. This would need to be in cooperation with Middletown Township.

Mr. Rodos stated that any of the above would allow for a full day kindergarten program to exist in Neshaminy.

Mr. Howard Lindner, Langhorne, PA, stated that he knows both of the candidates for the Athletic Director position. Mr. Lindner noted that as Ms. Boyle stated every school board in the state of Pennsylvania has the right to hire. The Administration makes a recommendation and the board has the final approval. Differences of opinion exist and it all boils down to democracy from a nine member board who has five votes. Opportunity can come at another time. It is necessary to know the facts. Disgrace is not valid terminology. This school board does an excellent job and is better than most school boards. Mr. Lindner is concerned that something that was to be confidential was known about by citizens and prepared speeches were given. Mr. Lindner noted that it is important that whoever is chosen for a position does a good job. When someone does not do a good job they should not be hired. Neshaminy School Board as a whole does the hiring and is responsible for checking and making sure everyone from the Superintendent on down does their job, and if not, there needs to be a system to eventually replace those individuals.

Reorganization of the Neshaminy Board of School Directors

In accordance with the State Code, the Board held its reorganization meeting.

Reading of Certificates of Election - Mr. Paradise read the certificates of election for Mrs. Susan Cummings, Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Mr. Richard Eccles, Mr. Ritchie Webb, and Mr. William O'Connor.

Loyalty Oaths - The loyalty oath of office was administered to Mrs. Susan Cummings, Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Mr. Richard Eccles, Mr. Ritchie Webb, and Mr. William O'Connor.

Election of Temporary President - Mr. Eccles requested nominations be presented for Temporary President for the reorganization of the Neshaminy Board of School Directors. Mr. Webb nominated Mr. Koziol as temporary President and Mr. Eccles seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. Mr. Eccles moved that

the nominations for Temporary President of the Neshaminy Board of School Directors be closed. A roll call vote indicated the Board approved the motion with nine ayes. Mr. Koziol acted as Temporary President.

Election of President – Mr. Koziol requested nominations be presented for President of the Neshaminy Board of School Directors. Mr. Webb nominated Mr. Eccles. Mrs. Cummings seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations for President. Mr. Webb made a motion to close the nominations. Mr. Eccles seconded the motion. The Board approved the motion to close nominations with nine ayes.

Mr. Koziol requested a roll call vote for Mr. Eccles as President of Neshaminy School Board. The Board approved Mr. Eccles as President of the Neshaminy School Board by a vote of five ayes (Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Eccles, Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. Koziol and Mr. Webb) and four nays (Mr. Blasch, Ms. Boyle, Mr. O'Connor, Dr. Spitz)

Election of Vice-President – Mr. Eccles requested nominations be presented for Vice President of the Neshaminy Board of School Directors. Mr. Webb nominated Mr. Frank Koziol. Mr. Eccles seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations for Vice-President. Mr. Eccles moved the nominations for Vice President of the Neshaminy Board of School Directors be closed. The Board approved the motion to close nominations with nine ayes.

Mr. Eccles requested a roll call vote for Mr. Koziol as Vice-President of Neshaminy School Board. The Board approved Mr. Koziol as Vice-President of the Neshaminy School board by a vote of five ayes (Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Eccles, Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. Koziol and Mr. Webb) and four nays (Mr. Blasch, Ms. Boyle, Mr. O'Connor and Dr. Spitz).

Motion: Appointment of Solicitor

Mr. Eccles presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the School Board Policy #100 requires during the month of December that the Board of School Directors appoint a solicitor for a one year term.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of School Directors reappoint the law firm of Begley, Carlin & Mandio as Solicitor of the Neshaminy School District in accordance with its fee letter dated November 30, 2007.

Mr. Koutsouradis seconded the motion.

Mr. Webb made a motion not to increase the hourly fee above last year's fee and retain the services of Begley, Carlin & Mandio at last year's rate. Mr. Eccles seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved the motion not to increase the hourly fee rate.

A roll call vote was taken on the Appointment of Solicitor and the Board approved Begley, Carlin & Mandio as solicitor by a vote of five ayes (Mrs. Cummings, Mr. Eccles, Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. Koziol, and Mr. Webb) and four nays (Mr. Blasch, Ms. Boyle, Mr. O'Connor, and Dr. Spitz).

Motion: Approval of Board Meeting Calendar

Mr. Eccles presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors must adopt and publish a schedule of Public Meetings for 2008.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the attached 2008 School Board Meeting Calendar be adopted by the Neshaminy Board of School Directors.

Dr. Spitz seconded the motion.

Dr. Spitz noted that the June 17th date is a conflict and Mr. Paradise stated that the meeting can be moved to Wednesday, June 18th.

Mr. O'Connor requested that Mr. Kadri provide a copy to the municipalities so possibly a conflict in scheduling would not occur, since many would like to attend both Township and School District meetings.

The Board unanimously approved the 2008 School Board Meeting Calendar.

Other Board Business

None.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Board Comment

Mr. O'Connor stated that during every political season one of the most prevalent and controversial issues is pay-to-play where campaign contributors are given lucrative contracts as a form of payback. Pay-to-play is not a Republican thing; it is not a Democratic thing. It is a political phenomenon that exists everywhere. Fortunately, Neshaminy is spared the perception of pay-to-play for the most part because school boards are obliged to go with the lowest bidder. One notable exception to the low-bid process is for our solicitor, and appropriately so. Since we do not want to low bid on a solicitor because good legal counsel is invaluable, we as a school board should do everything possible to give the public confidence that our appointment of a solicitor is not tied into campaign contributions. We can do this by adopting a policy that precludes any solicitor from consideration of employment by Neshaminy if they have made a donation either directly or indirectly to a Neshaminy school board candidate during a recent campaign cycle. We can make this idea even better by reducing a candidate's dependency on raising campaign funds by providing them with a valuable communications tool at no cost – the Neshaminy Cable TV network. Through such vehicles as televised debates or candidate profiles, this will be target marketing at its very best. Mr. O'Connor is confident that the active community members would appreciate this as an avenue by which to learn more about who they should vote for. Mr. O'Connor is not asking the board for consensus on this idea now. He will bring this forward again in the new year and ask that we refer the idea to Board Policies committee for development. If we work on this together as a bipartisan measure, the Board can craft a solution that will help to ease the public concerns over pay-to-play without creating an advantage for any one political party. Mr. O'Connor hopes that every board member will support this idea.

Mr. Paradise stated that the Board will meet on Tuesday, December 11, 2007, to review the Preliminary Draft of the Working Budget. Under Act 1 it must be made public on January 3, 2008. The entire budget process must be coordinated with the Primary Election date which is in April. The process is accelerated and projections are being made well in advance.

Mr. Eccles would not like to have the image of a fine Administrator of the school district be tarnished and would ask that the public refrain from comments directed towards this individual. This individual has a job to do. Mr. Eccles thanked the majority of the Board for their insight, courage, dedication and continued support for the children and taxpayers of this community. With this support Mr. Eccles will continue to represent this district and the Board with integrity and honesty. Mr. Eccles is very proud of this district and proud of the Board members who took a stand at the last meeting and voted to do what was right for the children and the district. These board members are a beacon of light in an otherwise sea of internal bureaucratic misuse. This Board has many challenges ahead. Contract negotiations, high school project, increasing test scores, and budgetary issues just to name a few. In order to accomplish these goals Board members will need to be honest in their efforts and honest to the community. There is no room for rumors, accusations, or what will make great headlines tomorrow. Mr. Eccles hopes that Board members will think and act for themselves and arrive at

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decisions through their own initiatives. Mr. Eccles quoted Joan Jankowsky of Centennial School District: "Make your decisions based on balancing the wants of the vocal minority with the needs of the silent majority."

Adjournment

Mr. Webb moved the meeting be adjourned and Mr. Koziol seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Eccles adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anita E. Walls
Board Secretary