

NESHAMINY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Langhorne, Pennsylvania

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING MINUTES
NESHAMINY BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
March 22, 2011

The Neshaminy Board of School Directors met in public session on March 22, 2011, 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
Ms. Irene M. Boyle
Mr. Scott Congdon
Mrs. Susan Cummings
Mr. Mike Morris
Mr. William Oettinger

ADMINISTRATORS:

Dr. Louis T. Muenker
Mrs. Barbara Markowitz
Mrs. Patricia Boylan
Dr. Geeta Heble
Dr. Jacqueline Rattigan

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mr. Kim Koutsouradis, Vice President
Mr. Richard M. Eccles
Mr. William D. O'Connor

OTHERS: Approximately 250 persons from the public, staff and press

SECRETARY: Mrs. Jennifer Burns

SOLICITOR: Thomas J. Profy, III, Esquire

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

Call to Order

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

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Announcements

Mrs. Cummings read a letter from Mr. Koutsouradis thanking everyone for their thoughts and prayers for his infant daughter, who has recently had some medical complications.

Public Comment

Janet Dougherty, parent of two field hockey players and an educator in the district, Feasterville, stated that she was requesting the Board for a policy change to allow Lisa Pennington to hold the head field hockey coaching position at Neshaminy High School. Under said policy, Ms. Pennington is restricted from coaching because she is a school administrator. Ms. Dougherty said that Lisa Pennington coached ten years at the high school and won the title of District One Champions in 2008, placed second in district playoffs three additional times, maintained a championship title for seven years in a row, was awarded "Coach of the Year" by the Bucks County Courier Times three times, as well as, "FedEx Coach of the Year". Ms. Dougherty also remarked that Lisa Pennington has been instrumental in helping Neshaminy athletes pursue their dreams of attending universities and playing field hockey at the college level. Ms. Dougherty said that Lisa Pennington brings a positive influence to the community and asked that the field hockey program benefit from Lisa's talent and love of sports.

Corrine Donnelly, junior at Neshaminy High School, Langhorne, commented that being a member of the field hockey team has been a great experience and she credits Lisa Pennington for motivating her to join the team. Ms. Donnelly said that the team is a sisterhood who cares about one another and she would like to see Ms. Pennington have the opportunity to keep it going.

Casey Dintinger, junior at Neshaminy High School, Feasterville, stated that she is a current member of Neshaminy's field hockey team. Ms. Dintinger said that she feels that no one is more qualified to coach the field hockey team than Lisa Pennington. Ms. Dintinger questioned why Ms. Pennington's position as Vice Principal should prevent her from coaching the field hockey team.

Jackie Koellner, junior at Neshaminy High School, Feasterville, stated that she has been playing field hockey throughout her school years and has always heard praises about Ms. Pennington's coaching talents. Ms. Koellner said she was very disappointed when Ms. Pennington was no longer able to coach the field hockey team after she was promoted to an administration position. Ms. Koellner commented that she would like to see the School Board change the policy to allow Ms. Pennington to coach the field hockey team because she is the best person for the job.

Charlotte Reese, player on Neshaminy's field hockey team, Trevese, stated that the team is like a family and sadly they are currently without a coach. Ms. Reese said the team needs someone with passion, dedication, expertise, experience and excitement to keep the team going. Ms. Reese stated that the best person to fill that position is Lisa Pennington. She further stated that she does not understand why Ms. Pennington has to choose between her administrative position and coaching the team when she is willing to do both.

Maria Koellner, former Neshaminy field hockey player, Trevese, implored the Board to review the policy that forbids an administrator from coaching a sport. Ms. Koellner asked if the policy is a written policy, and if so, could the community obtain a copy of the policy. She advised the Board that the neighboring school districts allow administrators to coach. Ms. Koellner said that the community wants to see a head coach that is willing to build up the program again, someone who has strong communication skills and a general concern for the safety and wellbeing of the athletes. Ms. Koellner said that Ms. Pennington has all of these qualities. She asked the administration, the School Board, and Dr. Muenker to consider these same qualities when considering the new field hockey head coach.

Beth Sinagoga, Maple Point Faculty and parent of two Neshaminy students, Langhorne, said she first came to Neshaminy twenty years ago as a student teacher. She said she was so impressed with the school district that she chose to become part of the teaching staff, as well as live in the district and raise her family here. Ms. Sinagoga remarked that teachers, principals, and administrators are committed to work together to provide Neshaminy students with the best education possible and she loves being a teacher. Ms. Sinagoga voiced her concern that the spirit of community and cooperation is breaking down because of the strain of contract negotiations. Ms. Sinagoga said that while the computer age is a wonderful communication venue, it also allows persons to forget manners and civility when making comments anonymously. She said that an agreement can be accomplished by both sides renewing commitments to the talks once a week and conduct the negotiations with mutual respect and confidence with each other.

Ken Gurysh, Neshaminy teacher and parent, Langhorne, said that he has been a Neshaminy teacher and coach for 18 years. He acknowledged that he loves teaching and molding the young minds of his students. He stated that many of his colleagues share that same passion for teaching. Mr. Gurysh said that lately there has been too much emphasis on the negative and he believes there should be more emphasis on the positive things that are going on in the district. He remarked that Neshaminy is a great community in which to raise a family, with great schools and great teachers. Mr. Gurysh said that he is proud to be a Neshaminy teacher and coach and this community should start taking pride in Neshaminy once again.

Stacy Kirsh, taxpayer, resident and teacher, Langhorne, stated that as a teacher, a parent, and a taxpayer she has the perspective to see both sides of the issue. She said she is baffled that the contract has not yet been settled. She stated that she is embarrassed that this dispute has resulted in some of Neshaminy's elected officials, taxpayers, and employees to act in a disrespectful way. Ms. Kirsh said that personal agendas should be set aside and both sides should settle the dispute.

Steve Rodos, semi-retired, Villages of Flower Mills, asked the Board to explain the increases in the proposed budget for this year. He said that some explanation to the public is warranted regarding the estimated \$7 million of increases in the proposed budget. Mr. Rodos expressed his concern over the reading proficiency rates of Neshaminy students. He quoted excerpts from an article that proposed some possible solutions to motivate children to develop better reading habits. Some of the suggestions were to convert text books to e-books, parents should limit video playing in exchange for reading, parents should convert TV time to reading time by turning down the sound and allowing children to read the closed captions.

Mark Shubin, sales executive, Langhorne, quoted from a recent press release in which the NFT President commented that the Board's position will take the professionalism out of the profession and sacrifice the educational gains that have been made in the last decade. Mr. Shubin said that this is an insult to all the great teachers in the community as well as those teachers from other school districts who make much less than Neshaminy teachers and who are indisputably professionals. Mr. Shubin said that compensation and professionalism are not the same. Mr. Shubin also challenged the NFT to show statistics that demonstrate what educational gains have been accomplished in the district. He said the NFT should stop disrespecting the public and their employers. In conclusion Mr. Shubin suggested that everyone should read a very informative article on school reform written by Joel Kline, the former New York Chancellor of Public Schools.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Muenker advised the Board on the following:

- Thanked the field hockey team for their comments.
- Read a letter from an outside resident who attended "Gym Night," and praised the students and teachers involved for a wonderfully organized show.
- Tina Meier will be hosting a Cyber bullying Presentation on Wednesday, March 23, 2011.
- Interact & Neshaminy Dance Team presents: "Neshaminy Idol." Tickets are on sale now. The show is Wednesday March 30, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium. Proceeds from this event will be donated to The March of Dimes and The Wet Nose Rescue.
- Neshaminy Dance Team will present, New "Dancing with the Faculty" on April 7th.
- Thank you went out to Giant Food Market in Feasterville who donated \$1,000 to Neshaminy School District.
- Last day of school for kindergarten through 11th grade will be June 17th, teachers will be June 21st. Graduation day is scheduled for June 8th and the rain date is June 9th.
- Announced that the State budget cuts for The Public School Education System in Pennsylvania will result in an approximate \$2.5 million dollar loss revenue for Neshaminy School District.

Mr. Webb announced that the \$2 million dollars that was cut from the budget and was previously mentioned at the last meeting will now be added back due to the recent State budget cuts.

Items for Approval Tonight

a) Overnight Trips

Dr. Rattigan presented the following trip for approval:

- Maple Point, Poquessing and Neshaminy High School to Radisson Hotel Harrisburg Hershey, Camp Hill, Pa – Future Problem Solving State Competition on April 1st and 2nd, 2011.

There was Board consensus for said trip. (Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. Eccles were not present).

Approval of Minutes

Mrs. Burns presented the minutes of February 22, 2011. Upon motion of Mrs. Cummings and seconded by Mr. Morris the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the February 22, 2011 Public Board Meeting. (Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. Eccles were not present).

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

Mrs. Markowitz presented the following for approval:

- February, 2011 Treasurer's Report, subject to audit
- Check Register – February, 2011
- Investment Summary
- Personal and per capita tax exonerations for February, 2011

Bids

Mrs. Markowitz presented the following bids. Information was presented prior to the meeting.

Bid No. 12-02

Amount: \$76,778.07

Bid Description: Supplies for physical education programs and various team sports for the school year 2011-2012.

Bid No. 12-15

Amount: \$61,948.00

Bid Description: Bituminous concrete paving resurfacing & repair at MPMS and Samuel Everitt Elementary.

Mrs. Cummings moved the February, 2011 Treasurer's Report be approved, subject to audit, Check Register for February, 2011, Investment Summary, and the Personal and Per Capita Tax Exonerations for February, 2011 be approved. Mr. Morris seconded the motion.

Mr. Morris asked if the Board is able to separate the insurance cost between the bargaining units.

Mrs. Markowitz responded that she will look into separating the cost in the future.

Mr. Webb asked Mrs. Markowitz to verify that the capital improvements are coming out of a separate fund and not the general fund.

Mrs. Markowitz affirmed that that is correct.

The Board unanimously approved said reports. (Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. Eccles were not present).

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.

Mrs. Cummings moved the Certified and Support Personnel Reports be approved. Ms. Boyle seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said reports. (Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. Eccles were not present).

Mr. David Shulick, the President of Delaware Valley High School, gave a presentation about his facility, which is an alternative school for at risk youth.

Motion: Approval of the Revised 2010-2011 School Calendar

Mr. Oettinger presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, inclement weather forced the closing of all schools on January 12 and 27 and elementary and middle schools on February 2, 2011; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the Pennsylvania School Code, it is necessary to revise the calendar in order to meet the minimum state child accounting and attendance regulations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of School Directors approves the attached revised school calendar, which schedules the last day for students in grades Kindergarten through 11 as June 17, 2011, and the last day for teachers as June 21, 2011.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that June 8, 2011 is designated as the date for the Neshaminy High School graduation.

Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion. (Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. Eccles were not present).

Motion: Approval of the Proposed 2011-2012 School Calendar

Ms. Boyle presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, each year the Board of School Directors must establish an official school calendar for the coming year; and

WHEREAS, the six participating school districts of the Bucks County Technical High School strive to establish a common school calendar; and

WHEREAS, the Board of School Directors reviewed the proposed calendar at the March 8, 2011 Public Work Session; and

WHEREAS, the proposed calendar was forwarded for comments to each of the employee bargaining groups.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors adopt the attached school calendar for the 2011 - 12 school year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of School Directors specifically designate Section 1502 holidays: December 23 and 26, 2011; February 20, 2012; and April 5 and 6, 2012 as five official local school district holidays.

Mr. Oettinger seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion. (Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. Eccles were not present).

Mr. Webb stated that the motion for the Approval of the BCIU #22 2011-2012 Programs & Services and Instructional Material & Research Services Budget was retabled.

Motion: Summer Programs for 2011

Mr. Congdon presented the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Neshaminy School District has operated a successful summer school program for 53 consecutive years; and

WHEREAS, in recent years has operated completely on a self-sustaining basis via student tuitions; and

WHEREAS, the following programs have been discussed with the Neshaminy Board of School Directors:

- Secondary Summer School (Enrichment and Make-up)
- Summer Fine Arts including Art, Instrumental Music, Summer Stock, and Summer Theater Workshop
- Summer Adventure Program

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Neshaminy Board of School Directors approves the request to operate summer programs for the 54th year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that students residing in Neshaminy School District be given first preference for program involvement and related program activities.

Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion.

The Board unanimously approved said motion. (Mr. Koutsouradis, Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. Eccles were not present.)

Federal Programs

Dr. Muenker advised the Board that there was one additional grant in the amount of \$5,000.00, which is to improve the HIV/AIDS and Pregnancy Prevention curriculum for all Middle School students in Neshaminy.

Other Board Business

None

Public Comment

Larry Pastor, business executive, Middletown, advised the Board to ignore the attacks that have been directed against them insinuating that the budget process is fraudulent. He said the community trusts the Board and stands behind them completely and sees the propaganda for what it is. Mr. Pastor asked Dr. Muenker if the teachers on the committees, specifically the Ed Development Committee, were reinstated on the committees after the "work to contract" or did they just resume their positions automatically. He also asked Dr. Muenker to explain specifically who has the power sitting at the table on these committees – the teachers or the administration. Mr. Pastor concluded by declaring that the Board should hold firm on their offer and do not accept a contract that does not include concessions by the NFT.

Stephen Pirritano, self-employed, Feasterville, read a letter that he recently sent to a State Representative regarding the teachers' contract of the Neshaminy School District. The letter advised the representative that the Neshaminy School District is involved in a long contested contract dispute with the NFT, which is going into the third year with no end in sight. Mr. Pirritano said that the NFT has refused the current generous offer that the Board has proposed. He said the quality of education is suffering because approximately 80% of the budgeted funds go towards salary and benefits. Mr. Pirritano's letter finished by asking the representative to come to the Neshaminy School Board public meetings and to declare his position on these issues. In conclusion, Mr. Pirritano urged the public to take the time to reach out to state senators and congressmen to help resolve these issues.

Steve Rodos, semi-retired, Villages of Flower Mills, asked Ms. Markowitz if the money that is supposed to come back from the township can be used towards the budget, or if it will be solely used for the high school.

Debra Harker, banker and Neshaminy parent, gave her perspective on her child's second grade classroom during the Work to Contract. Ms. Harker stated how devastating it was to send her child to a barren, unproductive classroom. She said she obtained permission to decorate the hallway with age appropriate materials that she purchased on her own to make the environment more inviting to the children. Ms. Harker was disappointed to find that these materials were removed by the teacher, which demonstrated that the "work to contract" was never about showing the extra work that teachers do. Ms. Harker said the "work to contract" hurt the children and the parents of Neshaminy will never forget this. She said the Board's offer is very fair and she supports their position. Ms. Harker implored all educators to show their professionalism and leave the children off the table.

Jerry Coleman, self-employed, Middletown, said he supports the request to allow Lisa Pennington to coach the field hockey team while continuing her duties as Vice Principal. He stated that he knows Ms. Pennington and feels confident that she can make this work to the benefit of the school district and the students. Mr. Coleman offered his concern for Mr. Koutsouradis during this personal difficult time. Mr. Coleman commented that at one time unions were necessary to protect the interest of the workers from "big business," but now unions are, unfortunately, the "big business." He said that the Business Administrator and Board that allowed the last contract to be written are responsible for a contract that did not specify all the duties expected of the teachers. Mr. Coleman suggested that future contract negotiations should begin in June, so there is no interruption to students during the school session and it can possibly be resolved prior to September.

Mr. McGinley, Neshaminy bus driver, Bensalem, said that for the past two years part of his responsibilities has been to transport Delaware Valley High School students. Mr. McGinley voiced his disappointment that Corey Howard's presentation was not allowed to be given, because in Mr. McGinley's opinion there are extreme disciplinary problems at DVHS. Mr. McGinley also described discipline problems on the school bus. He expressed his disappointment that the Board allowed the DVHS presentation referring to it as an infomercial.

Board Comment

Mr. Webb stated that since the Board is always looking for ways to cut expenses, they see no harm in allowing any presentation that offers savings to the district as long as they go through the proper channels.

Mr. Shulick explained that the three week police presence at the DVHS was due to a threat against a director by a teacher who was dismissed. He further expects that the Intermediate Unit will become an alliance partner with DVHS in the future, because DVHS is better equipped to handle disciplinary problems. Mr. Shulick invited anyone to visit the school at any time to view their policies and procedures.

Mr. Congdon recalled a lesson that he learned from a teacher while he was in middle school. The students were asked to write instructions for the simple task of making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Mr. Congdon said that the moral of the lesson taught him that it is almost impossible to include every detail when describing a specific task. Mr. Congdon said that he feels the principle behind the "work to contract" action was ridiculous and had he been a teacher he would not have abided by it. Mr. Congdon stated that that action only succeeded in hurting the students. He stated that the contract has to be fair to all concerned and he urged everyone to keep things in perspective.

Mr. Morris said he challenges the NFT to show the \$2.8 million dollars in savings that they have claimed to have offered. He said that the last offer from the NFT had no contributions or concessions. Mr. Morris said he regrets that there wasn't any disciplinary action taken with regards to the "work to contract." He concluded that the Board is willing to negotiate at any time; however, there will be no free healthcare.

Dr. Muenker confirmed that teachers did choose to resign from committees during the "work to contract" and afterwards were invited to come back if they chose to do so. He further stated that the teachers do not have the final say regarding decisions within the committees. Dr. Muenker said he takes exception with some of the figures that were given during the DVHS presentation. Dr. Muenker confirmed that the school district has a

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wonderful relationship with the IU and he was disturbed by some of the comments regarding the competency of the IU.

Mr. Webb noted that he forwarded an email to the Board's solicitor to contact the state mediator to arrange a negotiations session with the NFT and he is waiting for a response.

Adjournment

Mr. Morris moved the meeting be adjourned and Mrs. Cummings seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion. Mr. Webb adjourned the meeting at 9:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Burns
Board Secretary